

ROY BLAKELEY'S  
ELASTIC HIKE

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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# ROY BLAKELEY'S ELASTIC HIKE



"YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOCK ANY OF US DOWN," I SAID.

# ROY BLAKELEY'S ELASTIC HIKE

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

*Author of*

THE TOM SLADE BOOKS, THE ROY BLAKELEY  
BOOKS, THE PEE-WEE HARRIS BOOKS,  
WESTY MARTIN, ETC.

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# ROY BLAKELEY'S ELASTIC HIKE

## CHAPTER I

### ONE, TWO, THREE-GO!

A lot of fellows write letters and want to know if I'm a real boy. I guess they think I'm an imitation boy, hey? If they saw me eat they'd know I'm real all right. But one thing, anyway, I only eat one dessert at a time; Pee-wee Harris keeps three going at the same time.

Lots of scouts want to hike to where I live so as to meet me, but they better come at dinner time or else I won't be here. I'm not saying I don't like my home only I like the outside of it best.

If I'm not here when you come, go around to Bennett's Fresh Confectionery on Main Street and maybe I'll be there, but most likely I'll be up at Westy Martin's. He's the only one in my patrol that has any sense—he's kind of sober like.

In the summer you won't find me at all because I go up to Temple Camp with my troop. They're a crazy lot, especially my patrol. I should worry, because we have a lot of fun just the same.

If you come to Bridgeboro you'll know where I live, because it's on Blakeley's Hill; only in the summer it's all shut up like Pee-wee Harris. That's a joke. My father says he's like Barlow's Drug Store, because he never shuts up—they don't have such good sodas in there.

So now you see I'm real I'm going to write a story and it's a crazy one. Once I wrote a story and I said it was the craziest one that I ever wrote, but even this is worse, because it's crazier than all of them rolled into one. It's about a whole lot of things all kind of separated together. Especially it's about a toll-gate, only it isn't a toll-gate.

So now I'm going to start and go on till I come to the end, only you needn't think that's really the end, because more things keep happening all the time. When you come to the end that only means, kind of, that you bunk into the back cover of the book; it's kind of like a back stop. If it wasn't for that there would be more, but anyway, maybe you'll say there's enough and you needn't write to me and ask if these things really happened, because they even more than happened.

Anyway, if you want to call this story the elastic hike, you can do it—I don't care what you call it. That's a good name because it's about a hike that stretched all out kind of like a rubber band only different.

So first I'm going to tell you how Westy Martin (he's in my patrol) went out to the Rocky Mountains. He had a lot of adventures and they're all in

another story and I should worry about that only that summer my patrol was one scout short. So Pee-wee came up to see me—he's short too. He's so short he almost touches the ground. He has a fine shape, only his feet are too near his head.

So he came up to see me and he brought Dinkey Waters. Dinkey Waters is a new fellow in our town. His name is Dingman, but somebody thought it was Dinkman so we started calling him Dinkey. He lives in the red house up near Warde Hollister.

Pee-wee said, "Here's a new member for your patrol to take Westy's place, because, anyway, when he gets back he's going to be assistant scoutmaster." He said, "You got to thank me for finding you a scout."

I said, "Does he know we're crazy in my patrol? Suppose he should turn out to be sane?" Dinkey started laughing and he said he guessed he could be as crazy as any of us.

I said, "Guessing isn't enough, you've got to be sure of it."

So then he said he guessed he was sure—he was laughing all the time. I guess he meant he was positive that he wasn't quite sure, or he wasn't so sure about being not positive, anyway, he wanted to get into the scouts.

So that's how we got in with Dinkey Waters, and just you wait till you see what happened. Just then I started telling Dinkey about the scouts when all of a sudden I had to stop on account of static and interference. Otherwise Pee-wee. That's one thing about Pee-wee, you can't tune him out. He doesn't even need any aerial. He's a loud speaker.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIG FOUR

Now first I'll tell you about our troop, only this story isn't about the whole troop. Maybe you think Pee-wee is in my patrol, but he isn't, many thanks. He's the head of the Chipmunks. He's the head chip. Only most of the time he follows me around.

He used to be one of the raving Ravens, then he started the Chipmunks. He began with four scouts and worked up until he had two. Then he got two brothers, then two more brothers, and he got Ben Maxwell and Ben stays in that patrol because he has to have something to laugh at. He's more to be pitied than blamed.

There's another patrol in our troop and that's the Elks, Connie Bennett and that bunch. Stut Moran is in that patrol, he stutters; he goes scout pace with his tongue. But anyway that patrol isn't in this story. The only ones in this story are Silver Foxes except Pee-wee, because we couldn't get rid of him.

So now I'll tell you about the Silver Foxes—no, first I'll tell you about Pee-wee, because you're going to see him a lot and you're going to hear him too. The reason he isn't any taller is because his feet touched the ground too soon and that stopped him from growing. The end of him bunked against the earth. But, anyway, it's the other end of him that counts. To show you how much he knows he thinks superheterodyne is named after soup—his favorite soup is all kinds, especially tomato. That's his patrol color on account of Chipmunks being red. I guess that's why he likes the Silver Foxes so much, too, because Chipmunks are fond of nuts.

So now I'll tell you about the Silver Foxes—that's my patrol. We're not solid silver. We're hollow. That's what the cook up at Temple Camp says. We're good scouts, we're very helpful, we like three helpings. I'm the leader, then comes Westy Martin, only he doesn't come, he goes. He's out West now. Then comes Dorry Benton and Huntley Manners and Will Dawson and the Warner twins and Warde Hollister.

We're all crazier than each other. I like them all best. There are eight of us altogether, we remind ourselves of a Packard, because we're a straight eight. If every scout was an automobile, Pee-wee would be a Ford. So now you know about all the scouts in this story. Now comes some conversation. I bet you like that best.

Warde Hollister and I were sitting on the railing of my porch when Pee-wee came up with Dinkey. We didn't know what to do with ourselves because

school was just closed—that’s one thing I like about school.

Pee-wee said, “I was telling Dinkey how maybe he could get into your patrol and he says he’d like to.”

I said to Dinkey, “Have you ever been a scout before and if so, why not?”

“That’s a crazy question,” Pee-wee said.

I said, “Well, then, let him give me an answer and I’ll give him the question to it; you can ask Warde.”

“Ask Warde what?” the kid shouted.

“Anything you want to, I don’t care,” I said.

“That’s perfectly true,” Warde said.

“Now you see what kind of a bunch they are,” the kid said to Dinkey. “The only one of them that has any sense went out to the Rocky Mountains. *Gee whiz!*”

I said to Dinkey, “Do you know the five-mile rule about the Silver Foxes?”

“I was telling him,” Pee-wee shouted.

I said to Dinkey, “Did you ever walk five miles multiplied by two?”

“Correct, be seated,” Warde told him.

I said to Dinkey, “Did you walk them all at once or one at a time?”

“Now you see how crazy they are!” the kid shouted. “What did I tell you?”

I said to Dinkey, “Before you can join the scouts you have to turn around every day and be scared.”

“He means do a good turn and *be prepared!*” the kid shouted, all excited. “You can’t believe half he says.”

“That’s not true,” I said. “You can believe more than a third of it. I’ll leave it to Warde. Turning around means the same as doing a turn. Anybody that ever studied polite government knows that.”

“What do you mean *polite government?*” the kid fairly yelled. Oh, boy, we had him started. Dinkey was laughing so hard he couldn’t talk.

I said, “Polite means the same as civil. Didn’t you ever hear of civil government? Wrong as usual. That shows how much the Chipmunks know about arithmetic.”

“Will you tell him about your five-mile rule or won’t you?” Pee-wee yelled at me. “Do you want him to join your patrol or not? You try to make a fool out of everybody.”

“Some of them are ready-made,” Warde said. Then I told Dinkey about our rule that we have in our patrol. That was what Pee-wee had been telling him, because Pee-wee’s middle name is minding every other patrol’s business.

We all sat in a row on the railing of my porch, the four of us. We were just kind of dangling our legs, because we didn’t have anything else to do. Usually that’s the way it is the first day after school closes. So you better take a good look at us sitting there, because we’re the four heroes of this story. Maybe

you'd say three and a half heroes on account of Pee-wee being so small. Anyway, one lucky thing, you can't take a picture of an appetite. If you could take a snapshot of Pee-wee's appetite this book would have to be about as big as a dictionary.

Anyway, now I'm going to tell you about our five-mile rule—that's a Silver Fox rule.

## CHAPTER III THE FIVE-MILE RULE

So now I'm going to tell you about our five-mile rule that Pee-wee was always shouting about. I tell you what I'll do, I'll go back to the time my patrol was started. I'm the one that started it and I'm going to be the one to finish it if that bunch doesn't look out.

One day I was taking a walk with Westy Martin. He was my special pal. We walked along the old coach turnpike as far as the old toll-gate; that's about five miles from Bridgeboro. Oh, boy, that old toll-gate hadn't been used for about twenty years, I guess. Once upon a time old stage coaches used to go on that road. They don't use that road any more now on account of the dandy state road.

That old road goes way down through the country and there are old-fashioned houses on it, and farms, and all like that. It's a peach of a place for hiking. You can get dandy apples along there, and blackberries too. There's an awful nice man and he lets you pick apples off the ground, only not out of the trees. Gee whiz, I don't care where they come from, but I know where they go to you can bet.

There's a place along that road where there used to be a bridge, but it's all broken down now and you have to get across the stream any way you can. A lot we worried about that. Westy and I made a raft out of a couple of old planks and we reminded ourselves of Washington crossing the Delaware getting across that stream. Then we hiked on to the old toll-gate.

That was the first time we ever saw the old toll-gate. It was about as big around as a cop's house, only a little bigger, only it wasn't round, it was octagon shape. In there there used to be a toll-taker long, long, long ago. And you could see where there used to be a bar across the road that the toll-keeper moved around when wagons came. It was a dandy place. We couldn't get inside, because it was locked, but it had an old stove in it and everything—we could see through the window. I guess the toll-taker used to live in it and I bet it was great away off there on that lonely road with woods all around.

Westy and I sat down on an old board seat outside. There was an old sign, gee whiz, we could hardly read it, but it said five miles to Bridgeboro. I bet Bridgeboro wasn't so big then, hey?

That was when Westy and I started talking about having a scout patrol, while we were sitting there resting. That's really where the Silver Foxes started. That's the Cradle of Liberty—life, liberty, and the pursuit of fun.

That's a kind of a shrine, I mean it was. Maybe some day pilgrims will go to it to see where the Silver Foxes started. I wish them luck—I should laugh. Anyway, our patrol has got a dandy history, only I don't see anything so dandy about history.

So now you know where the Silver Fox patrol started. That's the liveliest patrol next to the police patrol.

Westy said while we were sitting there, he said, "What do you say we start a patrol to join the First Bridgeboro Scout Troop? We can get Dorry and Hunt Manners and the Warner team; it ought to be easy."

"No sooner said than stung," I said. "We'll start it right away quick if not sooner. What shall we call it?" He said, "The Laughing Hyenas would be good, because you're always grinning."

I said, "The bears would be better, only bears don't eat anything all winter."

"Rejected by a unanimous majority," he said. So then we decided on the Silver Foxes and Westy said I'd have to be patrol leader. I said all right, I would, if the rest of them said so. So that's how I started patrol leading. Good night, it's some job.

After that Westy and I cut our initials in that old toll-gate and we said that every fellow who wanted to join the patrol would have to hike to that cradle of the Silver Foxes (that's what we called it) and cut his initials there to prove he had hiked ten miles, five miles there and five miles back. I guess it's about fifty miles back, anyway it's only five miles there.

Pretty soon all the new fellows in the patrol had their initials there. The last one was Warde Hollister. You can't be a Silver Fox till you cut your initials there; that's the rule. So that's why Pee-wee was telling Dinkey Waters about the ten-mile hike. He tells everybody about it. Warde joined my patrol about the time we had our bee-line hike. I guess you read about that. It's a straight story, that's a joke. But this story is crazier.

So long, I'll see you in the next chapter. That's when things begin to happen. And I'm going to tell you the plain truth, but sometimes it's kind of fancy like a crazy quilt, only crazier. Believe me when it comes to telling the truth I don't have to stretch anything in this story, because it stretches itself. And every word of it is true, even the punctuation marks.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOLEMN PLEDGE

Now I'm going to be serious for about a page, maybe only two pages, I can't tell. But there was a reason why we made that rule about having every fellow that was going to get into our patrol do that hike to the old toll-gate.

One reason we didn't want any flat tires or false alarms in our patrol and we wanted to make sure a fellow could do something if he was going to be a scout. We said if he was the kind of a fellow that would hike five miles and back again he was all right. And besides that he'd have to find a way to get across where that old bridge used to be. We didn't care how he did it, if he swam it or how. But if he came back and said he couldn't make the hike after he said he would, just on account of a bridge not being where it ought to be, that would show he wasn't solid silver, only silver plate or something like that and Silver Foxes are solid silver just the same as the Golden Eagle patrol over in East Bridgeboro are only gold filled. They make me laugh, that bunch.

So then I told Dinkey Waters just what he'd have to do and of course Pee-wee had to butt in like he always does, doing all the talking.

"All right, let him talk," I said.

"I'm only telling him what he has to do," the kid shouted, "because I'm going along too, you can bet."

"Good night!" Warde said.

The kid shouted, "You have to hike to the old toll-gate and cut your initials there where all the rest of them are and you have to hike back again and you have to get across the stream your own way without anybody helping you, doesn't he, Warde? And you have to make a solemn pledge that you won't eat your lunch while you're sitting there before you start back, but you can't eat anything till you get there anyway, what do you care, it's only five miles and you can do it in less than two hours and I'm going with you too. Warde and Roy and I will go." Then he stopped and came up for air.

Dinkey Waters said, "Sure I'll do it."

"Do you make a solemn vow you won't eat anything till you get to the toll-gate?" the kid shot at him.

"Do you?" I asked him.

"*Suuure* I do," Pee-wee said, very big like. "Do you think even I couldn't starve for an hour? Because anyway I was telling him how if a scout says he'll do it even if he can't do it because——"

"A scout's honor is to be toasted," I said.

"It's better fried," Warde said; "it's best fried on both sides, inside and out. Tell him all about law one, kid," he said, kind of winking at me.

"I'll tell you about it," Pee-wee shouted. "If a scout doesn't do exactly a given task he can't be a scout. That's law one. You look in the Handbook. I'll leave it to Warde. Isn't it there?"

"It's there as clear as mud," Warde said.

"I'd take you in my patrol only it is full," Pee-wee said. "Isn't it, Roy?"

"I never saw any of you empty," I told him.

"So we'll start to-morrow morning right after breakfast, hey?" the kid said, all the time dancing around all excited. "Because four of my patrol are away and Ben Maxwell is going to paint his canoe so I can go with you so raise up your hand."

Warde said, "Good night, we don't have to run our patrol. P. Harris runs it for us."

Warde gave me a funny kind of a wink as if he wanted to tell me to let the kid manage the whole thing. He said, "Go ahead, administer the pledge, kid."

I said to Dinkey Waters (gee, he's an awful nice fellow, I'll say that), I said, "If you want to be a solid Silver Fox, absolutely guaranteed, raise up your left foot and place it against your right knee, then raise your left hand and keep it raised while you lift both feet off the ground. Then answer carefully the following questions:

"What was your correct age when you were born?"

"Do your parents reside in America or do they only live here and if so, which?"

"Do you eat chocolate sundaes?"

"Will you shut up and have some sense even if you haven't got any!" Pee-wee yelled. "Do you want me to give him the pledge or not?"

"If you give it to him you'll never get it back," I said.

"Will you shut up!" Pee-wee screamed at me.

"All we want is a little sense, and not too much of that," Warde said.

I said, "You are absolutely right, Warde. Pee-wee wants to give a pledge and it isn't his to give. On with the dance, I mean the hike. Go ahead and we'll all be serious."

So then Pee-wee shouted at Dinkey, "Do you solemnly promise to hike to the old toll-gate and cut your initials there, and not eat anything till you get there, and then hike back?"

"Are we all going to do it?" Dinkey wanted to know. I guess he didn't know what to think, Warde and I were laughing so hard.

"Sure we are!" Pee-wee shouted, "only we're not going to cut our initials because Warde's and Roy's are there already and I'm not a Silver Fox anyway. But anyway, we're going."

Dinkey looked at me. Jiminy, I guess he didn't know what to think.

I said, "It's all true and we'll start to-morrow morning. Do you say you'll do it? A scout's honor is to be toasted."

"I'm with you," Dinkey said.

"Will you promise never to do anything that has any sense to it?" I asked him.

He said, "I promise."

And jimmy crinkums I have to admit he has always kept his word.

## CHAPTER V

### SEALED

The next morning the four of us started out along the old turnpike. Usually when a tenderfoot goes on a new-member hike (that's what we always call it) two or three Silver Foxes go along with him. This time Pee-wee went too on account of the members of his patrol being away or sick or something or other. Gee, he was all dressed up like a circus with his ax and his scout knife and his compass and his frying pan dangling from his scout belt. All he needed was four-wheel brakes and a muffler. He had his lunch in a brief-case that was hung over his shoulder.

I said, "You must be going to have a very brief lunch."

"Or else they must be very big sandwiches," Warde said.

The kid said, "I've got some strawberry shortcake."

I said to Dinkey, "He calls it shortcake because he keeps it such a short time. He's very fond of the holes in Swiss cheese too. He likes balloon tires because they remind him of homemade crullers. How many tongue sandwiches have you got, kid?"

"That's all right how many I've got," Pee-wee said. "I bet we'll all be good and hungry when we get to the toll-gate."

"We can eat before we get there," I said. "I know a big rock along the road \_\_\_\_"

"I don't think Pee-wee would care to eat a rock," Warde said.

"Don't be too sure of that," I said. "Maybe we could eat at the old bridge, where it isn't."

"That shows how much you stick to resolutions!" the kid shouted, all excited.

"He thinks we're bottles of glue," I said.

"Are you going to do it right or not?" the kid yelled.

"Absolutely, no, we are," I shot back at him.

"You have a rule and you get a new member that's a nice fellow and then you start doing not like you said, so what will he think——"

"Silver Foxes are not supposed to think," Warde said.

"Wrong the first time," I said. "They're supposed to think about doing things, but not do them. What's the difference between Pee-wee's mouth and school?"

"The school is closed up," Warde said. "Right the first time," I told him. Oh, jiminy, you should have seen Dinkey Waters laughing.

All of a sudden Pee-wee exploded. He's a two-syllable word meaning T.N.T. When he broadcasts he drowns out all the other stations.

I said, "Listen, Pee-wee is going to bread crust."

"Are you going to do it or not?" the kid hollered at me. "We all came up here to your house with our lunches like you said and now are you going to make a fool out of Dinkey? Are we going to keep the pledge about hiking to the toll-gate and not eating our lunches till he's a Silver Fox—till he cuts his initials there? Are we going to do it? Because if we're not, I'm going home to get up in the tree and fix my aerial——"

"He's always going up in the air," Warde said.

I said, "Sprouts and scouts, this is serious. Shut up and listen to your patrol leader. All Chipmunks that are in on this keep still and listen too. I have in my pocket—here it is—a piece of sealing-wax given to me by a trained seal. I swapped with Doc Carson for a fountain pen. Every member and would-be and non-member and dismember and remember and December and everybody else connected with this exposition——"

"You mean *expedition*," Pee-wee shouted.

"I don't have to say what I mean," I said. "I'm talking about what I'm *saying*, not what I'm *meaning*. Every member of this first aid or crusade or whatever you call it that wants to see Dinkey Waters made into a solid Silver Fox by carving his initials on the old toll-gate five miles from this spot will lay his lunch down on that porch chair."

"Yes, and you'll eat it," shouted Pee-wee.

"Each one will lay his lunch down on that porch chair," I said.

Pee-wee was the last one to do that. Gee, it was funny to see him lift the strap over his neck and put his brief-case down in the chair. Dinkey's lunch was in a paper, so was Warde's. Mine was in a flat box that I can put in my pocket. So then I lit a match and melted some sealing-wax on every package and I jabbed my scout pin down into the melted wax. On Pee-wee's brief-case I dropped a whole big gob of melted wax just where the cover laid on the other part.

Then I said, "You think I can't be sober. Sprouts, we are going to hike to the old toll-gate five miles from Bridgeboro. That's a good stiff walk. Whenever we take in a new member we go on a fast for about two hours—that doesn't mean minutes. No one is allowed to eat until the pilgrimage to the shrine is all finished and the new fellow's initials are cut in the old toll-gate. Then the scout pilgrims can eat all they want, even more, I don't care. As Westy Martin said when he became a Silver Fox, my only regret is that I have but four sandwiches and two bananas to eat for my patrol——"

"I was there!" Pee-wee shouted.

I said, "Yes, and you got one of the bananas; yes, we have no appetites. So

now do you all solemnly pledge your scout honor to live up to the custom of the Silver Foxes and eat absolutely nothing, or even less than that maybe, until Dinkey Waters has carved his initials on the old toll-gate? Each one say *I do.*”

So then they all said it one after another good and loud, especially Pee-wee. He has a voice like the World War. Then after that we started out on our Silver Fox pilgrimage.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRIAL BY JURY

We started out good and early. Gee, I guess it was as early as eight o'clock. Anyway, Bennett's wasn't open because Pee-wee wanted to stop in there for a soda; he doesn't call sodas food. "It isn't food if you drink it," he said.

I said, "You don't drink ice cream, do you?" He said, "Ice cream doesn't count."

"Will you listen to that?" Warde began, laughing. "It counts with me all right."

Pee-wee said, "Anyway, let's wait till Bennett's opens."

"Absolutely, positively, refused by a unanimous majority," I said. "I'm the head Silver Fox and I'm the head of this pilgrimage and what I say goes, and ice cream sodas are food and we're not going to eat anything like that till we get to the old toll-gate and Dinkey cuts D. W. in the wood."

"Do you say ice cream is food?" the kid shouted, kind of hanging back in front of Bennett's.

"Now we're going to have a debate," Warde said. "Is ice cream strawberry or vanilla and if not why should it?"

"That's absolutely true," I said. "It's the truest lie I ever heard."

All the while Dinkey was laughing so hard he could hardly stand up. I saw right away that he was going to make a good Silver Fox. All he needed was a little time to get good and crazy.

I said, "This is a swell kind of a shine——"

"You mean shrine!" Pee-wee shouted.

"We're Silver Foxes, all except you," I said, "and you don't shrine silver, you *shine* it. I'm wrong and you're right as I usually am. Did we start out for Bennett's, or did we start out for the old toll-gate?"

"Do you know anything about logic?" the kid shouted.

"I know all about French history, I mean French pastry," I said.

"Do you say you chew ice cream?" the kid wanted to know, all the while kind of hanging back. "I know because I don't chew it, so let's hear you answer that argument."

"That's not an argument," I said. "He calls it an argument about his chewing ice cream."

"What is it, then?" the kid shouted.

"It's a habit," I said.

"Do you drink it?" the kid said. "You got to either eat it or drink it. I drink

it so I got a right to wait here till Bennett's opens and have a chocolate soda."

Warde said, "He may be right about that, maybe we'd better wait."

Honest I wish you could have seen Dinkey Waters. He just sat down on the doorstep in front of Bennett's and began laughing so loud he shook all over. Then Warde sat down alongside of him and I sat down alongside of Warde and the kid sat down too, and there we were all sitting in a row on the doorstep of Bennett's having an argument about whether you chew ice cream or drink it. Some bunch of pilgrims, hey?

I said, "Well, we've done fine so far. We've come about one thirty-secondth of a mile; that was some hike! And already we're talking about eats."

"You mean drinks!" the kid shouted. "I said I wouldn't eat anything and I'm not going to, not till I get there——"

"You bet you're not," I said.

He said, "But I can drink an ice cream soda. I'll leave it to Dinkey, do you chew ice cream?"

"I think you absorb it," Dinkey said.

"He doesn't know what that word means," Warde put in.

"Maybe you kind of press it with your tongue," Pee-wee said. "But that's more drinking it than eating it. Anybody that says you don't have to chew a thing to eat it is crazy, and if you don't chew it then it's a beverage——"

"A which?" I asked him.

"Something that you drink," he shouted. "You learn that in the second grade."

"All right then," I said, "why is a raspberry sundae? If crack means the same as split what's the difference between a wise crack and a banana split? You could say a banana crack just as well, or a wise split, it's the same only different. The w is silent as in hash. Come on, let's finish our pilgrimage. We have four miles and ninety-nine one-hundredths yet to go."

Pee-wee said, "I'm not a Silver Fox and I'm not going to be bossed by you because you're crazy anyway, because even your sister says so."

"You can't believe my sister," I said; "she's all the time saying things about me that are true. I tell you what we'll do, we'll have a citizens' jury. We'll ask the first man that comes along if you chew ice cream and if he says *no* then we'll sit here and wait till Bennett's opens. Do you agree to that, or do you agree to it—which?"

"No, we do," said Warde.

"Who'll be the one to ask him?" Pee-wee wanted to know. All the while he was looking up and down the street for the girl that works in Bennett's. I guess he often beats her there in the morning.

"I'll be the one," I said, "because I'm the head of this membership pilgrimage. So that's settled because we all believe in the jury system or they



wouldn't have juries of awards in the Scouts.”

“The first man that comes along,” Warde said. “If any man should come along ahead of the first one?” Dinkey said.

“Then we'd have to start all over again,” I told him. “I see you're going to make a dandy Silver Fox.”

So then all of a sudden along came a Chinaman.

I said, “Hey, mister, would you kindly tell me whether you drink ice cream or chew it?”

He said, “Belly good e chewey, nicey day.”

“It's as clear as mud,” I said; “the pilgrims are ordered to all stand up and proceed upon their pilgrimage to the Shine.”

“Here comes a wop,” Dinkey shouted.

“The jury has decided,” I said, “and there will be no eats till we get to the old toll-gate.”

Just then along came the girl that works in Bennett's. But by the time she got to the store we had started off; Pee-wee was kind of hanging behind, but he came along just the same.

## CHAPTER VII

### CROSSING BRIDGES BEFORE WE GET TO THEM

So pretty soon we were out of Bridgeboro, hiking along the old turnpike. One good thing about the houses along that road, there aren't any. Anyway there aren't very many. It's all woods on both sides.

We took our time because why should we be in a hurry? Oh, boy, the first days of vacation are great! We just kind of wandered along talking a lot of nonsense and getting into arguments and jollying Pee-wee, you know the way we always do. We saw how far we could kick stones without their going off the road and all things like that. Dinkey Waters was awful funny after he kind of got to know us. First he was sort of bashful, but after a while he got to be not like that. He jumped over a puddle and he said he was good at doing cross-road puddles.

Whenever Pee-wee and I got started in mortal comeback he started laughing.

After a little while the head Chipmunk said, "These are pretty long miles, *geeeeeee whiz!*"

I said, "In the warm weather they expand, in the winter they contract. That's why a mile is always longer in the summer than in the winter."

"That shows how much you know," Pee-wee screamed at me. "A mile is a mile anyway."

"Fancy that," Warde said.

"Anyway, I'm tired," the kid said, "and I'm getting hungry too. I know where we can get some apples; apples don't count as eats."

"No, you drink them," I said.

"You absorb them," Dinkey said.

I said, "Before we get to the apples we have to cross the stream where the bridge isn't and Dinkey has to do that without anybody telling him how he should do. He can swim it or get across any way he wants to, only he can't use the log bridge Westy and I built, because that's only for fellows who have found out a way of their own to get across. That log bridge is there, but new fellows are not supposed to see it. It's like Pee-wee in his patrol, he's in it only he isn't."

"I guess I can think of a way if all the other fellows did," Dinkey said.

"You've got to show how you've got resources," Pee-wee told him.

Dinkey asked me, "How wide is it?"

I said, "It isn't so wide as it is narrow; it's maybe about twelve feet narrow."

The width is a different matter. Anyway, the stream has two sides to it.”

“Can’t you answer a sensible question?” Pee-wee yelled. “Can’t you tell one of your own patrol when he wants to know something?”

“He’s not supposed to want to know anything,” I said. “Silver Foxes don’t know anything, do they, Warde? We brought you with us, that proves we have no sense.”

“You don’t have to prove it,” Pee-wee said. Dinkey said, “Well, if it’s about ten feet I couldn’t jump it without a long pole——”

“That’s one dandy idea,” I said. “That shows you’re going to make a scout \_\_\_\_\_”

“If you only had a decent patrol,” Pee-wee said.

Dinkey said, “The Silver Foxes are good enough for me.”

“And you’re good enough for them,” Warde said.

“And I discovered him too,” Pee-wee shouted.

I said, “Sure, when it comes to discovering Columbus doesn’t count any more, not with you, even if he did discover Columbus Circle.”

“Do you know why he called it Columbus Circle?” Warde said.

“Because he went around so much before he discovered it,” I said. “Ask me any answer and I’ll tell you the question to it.”

“Columbus Circle was only started about, maybe about, fifty years ago,” the kid said. “I guess you don’t even know Columbus is dead.”

“I didn’t know he was sick,” I told him. “Will you please keep still and let me give some instructions to my new recruit?” I said. Pee-wee would be all right if he had his tongue bobbed.

So that’s the way we kept talking as we hiked along, taking our time kind of happy-go-lucky through the woods.

Warde said, “You could vault across a long pole if you found one there, but you wouldn’t have a right to bring a pole or a rope or anything like that from Bridgeboro. You’re supposed to cross the stream just as if you happened to come to it and never knew it was there; see?”

Dinkey said, “It would be all right to swim it, wouldn’t it?”

“Sure it would,” I said, “only you’d have to stop and dry your clothes on the opposite side. And anyway you have to carry your own lunch, that’s the rule, and if you swam across you’d get it wet——”

“And you’d have to drink it or absorb it,” Warde said.

“And if you ate your lunch before you swam across you’d be breaking the Silver Fox rule,” I said, “because you’re supposed not to eat your lunch till you get to the toll-gate. And you’d be breaking a Temple Camp rule too, because a scout is supposed not to go in swimming for two hours after eating. And if you ate your lunch and then waited two hours before you swam across you’d be breaking another Silver Fox rule, because we made a rule that a fellow can’t

hang around at that brook.”

“You make me tired!” Pee-wee yelled.

Dinkey started laughing and he said, “Yes, but I’ve got you beaten, because I couldn’t break a scout rule without being a scout and I’m not a scout till I’m a Silver Fox and I’m not a Silver Fox till I cut my initials in the old toll-gate. So the rules don’t count on the way there and on the way back you can bet I won’t be worrying about my lunch.”

“That’s a dandy argument,” Pee-wee shouted. “It’s a teckinality—the Silver Foxes, they think they’re so smart! That shows we can all eat our lunches any time we want to. I’ll leave it to Warde.”

“Follow your leader,” I said, “and stop shouting about eats.” Then I started along the road scout pace singing a crazy rime that I made up like some of those that Hervey Willetts was always singing in the Funny-bone Hike.

That rule is a good one as every Fox knows,  
Don’t twist it or bend it or kick or oppose;  
Get over the river wherever it flows,  
Then follow your leader wherever he goes.

## CHAPTER VIII CRAZY STUFF

After a while we came to the stream. I guess we were hiking about two hours before we came to it. That was because we took our time. We should worry. Once we found a patch of mushrooms and Pee-wee wanted to start a fire and cook some in his trusty scout frying pan. Jiminies, I had to pull him away from them. He wanted to start a fire without a match, you know, by rubbing sticks or something or other.

I said, "No, thanks, I have to be home by Christmas. If you want to get a light that way you have to start back in about the tenth century." Oh, boy, but that stream was running fast! It was good and wide too.

Warde said, "It's the spring freshets all right." I said to him, "I never knew they'd get as fresh as that. This looks more like the Mississippi River. We're all going to have some job getting across here."

When you get near that stream the road all kind of fizzles out so there isn't any; I guess no wagons ever go that far. Autos don't go on that road at all, anyway I never saw any. Most always when we had gone there it was in the winter or late in the summer after we got home from Temple Camp. So I guess that's why we had never seen the stream so wide, and rushing like mad. The logs that Westy and I had fixed across the water were gone.

Pee-wee said, "Now what are we going to do?"

"Do you blame me?" I asked him.

"It's a regular flood," Warde said.

I threw a stick in and it went sailing away. Jiminies, in about three seconds we couldn't see it at all.

Warde said, "Do you notice how wet the water is? I wonder if it's always like that."

Then up piped Scout Harris. He said, "This would be a good place to eat as long as we can't go any further."

"Who says we can't go any further?" Dinkey wanted to know. "It's for me to think up a way."

"Sure, we should worry," I said. "Warde and I have been across already; and all the other scouts in my patrol have, too. Now you've got to think of a way to get across, then we'll go in advance of you, following leisurely, merrily, merrily."

"There you go with your *merrily, merrily* again," the kid shouted. "You learned that from that crazy Fuller Bullson that you met last summer. How are

we going to get across with the water like this, that's what *I* want to know?"

"Ask Dinkey," I said. "I don't have to get to be a Silver Fox, I'm one already."

"I'm glad I'm not one," Pee-wee said.

"The pleasure is mine," I told him.

Warde said to Dinkey, "You'd better not try to swim it, the water's rushing too fast, and besides you'd only have to hang around and dry your clothes."

"They're old clothes," Dinkey said.

"Yes, but just the same I wouldn't try that," Warde said. "But suit yourself, whatever you do we'll follow."

Dinkey stood there looking all around and at the water and everything, trying to think how he'd get across. Warde and Pee-wee and I sat on an old log watching him. Warde pushed Pee-wee over backwards and said:

"Three little boy scouts don't know what to do,  
One fell over backwards, then there were two."

All the while Dinkey kept looking around and thinking. I saw that fellow was going to be a good scout because you couldn't stump him. "It's as hard for you as it is for me this time," he said, kind of laughing.

"Don't you worry about us," I said. "There's the stream, now it's up to you."

"You got to have resources," Pee-wee shouted at him.

Getting across that water was always easy before, I'll say that. When Hunt Manners got into the Silver Foxes he just poled across on a kind of a raft that was a part of the old bridge. When Dorry Benton did he wore his bathing suit under his other clothes and he put his clothes in an oilskin bag and carried it while he was swimming. Will Dawson had the easiest time of all, because the water was so shallow then that he just waded across.

But, *oh, boy*, now it was a regular torrent. That's why you don't ever want to join the Silver Foxes in the spring. It's best to join in the winter when there's only a little water, and when maybe even it's frozen too. But anyway you'd better not join at all, that's the safest way, because we're all a lot of nuts and besides there isn't any more room in my patrol so you couldn't get in anyway even if you wanted to. The pleasure is yours and many of them, because on account of the things we do. But I'll say this much, you might better be in the Silver Foxes than in the Chipmunks or the raving Ravens or the Elks. We're the same as other patrols only different.

Dinkey said, "Well, it's got to be did; I wouldn't start anything that I couldn't finish."

"Oh, it's all the same to us," I said.

"Only hurry up and think because I'm hungry," the head Chipmunk piped

up.

Dinkey said, "I'll make it somehow or other." I said, "It's all the same to us, we're having a good rest, we don't mind sitting here.

"Three little boy scouts, they're not in a hurry,  
They don't have to think up anything, they should worry."

Pee-wee said, "Do you call that poetry? There are too many words to it."

"There are too many words to you, too," I said. "Why should I be so stingy with words?" So then we all just kept sitting on the log making up crazy rimes and watching Dinkey.

I said, "Take your time and think carefully before acting."

The kid said, "I wouldn't go to such trouble to get into an insane asylum."

"You could get into one without any trouble at all," Warde told him.

"It's a very small matter," I said.

"What is?" the kid yelled.

"You are," I said; "no sooner said than stung. You're so small you wouldn't even take a tall chance—leave it to Dinkey."

Dinkey said, "I don't have to cross right here, do I? Would it be all right to cross upstream a ways if I found a good place?"

I said, "All you have to do is get on the other side."

"Which is the other side?" Warde wanted to know. "It's the same as a scout staff; which is the other end of it?"

I said, "That's easy, the other side is the one that's opposite the side that's across the way from it. But you have to find one side before you can tell which is the other. Then you multiply by the pronoun. It's the same as how many onions are there?"

"Where?" Pee-wee screamed at me. "Anywhere," I said. "What difference does it make to me? Come on, follow your leader." I said that because Dinkey had started along the bank of the brook, kind of studying it. And we all followed in a row, first me—I mean I—then Warde, then Pee-wee. All the while I was singing:

"It's hard to get over because the stream rose,  
So follow young Dinkey wherever he goes."

## CHAPTER IX

### A TRAGEDY

I said to Pee-wee, "Well, anyway, we have to hand it to you, you brought us one cracker jack scout all right; he'll get across, you see."

All the while Dinkey was following up the shore going further and further from where the old road was.

Pee-wee said, "We didn't agree to follow the brook, we agreed to follow the road; now we're going out of our way and maybe he'll follow this brook for maybe four or five miles hunting for a place to cross. Do you mean to tell me he has a right to do that? When will we ever get to the old toll-gate I'd like to know? Do you think I'm going to wait forever for lunch? *Geeeeee whiz!*"

I said, "Did you make a solomon agreement not to eat till we get to the Shine or not? No, you did. The eats are sealed up under the great seal of the Silver-plated Foxes——"

He said, "Yes, but I didn't make a pledge to starve, did I? Look where he's going. The toll-gate is east from here and he's going north. Can you get east by going north, answer me that?"

"Sure, you can," I told him. "Look at a merry-go-round. Which way do you go on it—north, east, south or west? If a man starts going south and keeps going straight he'll get to the North Pole, I'll leave it to Warde."

"I don't want it," Warde said; "we've got four clothes-poles at our house already."

"Being crazy, you call that being scouts?" the kid shot at me. "I bet now Dinkey sees what you're like he won't join after all."

"He can join or come in whichever he pleases," I said. "Or he can join by becoming a non-member, we don't care. We have a lot of non-members, haven't we, Warde?"

"Sure," Warde said, "we have a larger list of non-members than any other scout patrol in the United States. We have about ten million boys who are non-members. There's some record for you. Beats any Victrola record you ever saw."

I said, "Yes, but those fellows don't go round as much as Victrola records do. I'll leave it to Pee-wee."

"The Chipmunks have got as many non-members as the crazy Foxes," Pee-wee said.

"You can't be a non-member of two patrols," I told him; "you look in the Handbook. Maybe you've got more, but you couldn't possibly have as many."



Dinke was about ten or fifteen feet ahead of us, hiking along the shore and he stopped and turned around and started to laugh at all the nonsense. He said, "You fellows remind me of a comic sheet."

"We're like a sheet, we're full of wrinkles," I said.

"You mean a crazy quilt," Pee-wee shouted.

Just then something happened destined to have fateful consequences—that's a dandy sentence, I got it out of a book. I'll tell you how it was. Pee-wee didn't have any answers to my masterly arguments so all of a sudden he kind of seemed as if he was going to push the lunches out from under my arm.

Now those four lunches were all kind of separated together so I could carry them because I wouldn't trust anybody else to do it, safety first. So I had Pee-wee's brief-case and the other three lunches all strapped together kind of like school books under the great seal of the Silver Foxes. I had them strapped together with a book strap I got from Petey Warren. I gave him a compass for it.

So then when I saw Dinkey standing there laughing at us I said, "Here, catch this, Dinkey, safety first." And I slung it to him by swinging the end of the strap. Then he threw it to Warde and Warde made out to throw it to Pee-wee only he didn't, but he threw it to me and we were all throwing it to each other. Anyway, that didn't last long, but it lasted longer than the lunches would have lasted.

After a little while Dinkey got to a place where, the brook wasn't quite so wide, but, jiminyes, it was wide enough. He stopped where there was a big tree and looked at it. One branch went almost across the brook.

Warde said, "What's the idea?"

Dinke said, "If I could get out to the end of that branch my weight would bend it down and I could drop on the other shore."

I said, "You needn't ask us what to do. We're not supposed to give you any advice. You're supposed to get across, and if you do we'll follow you; that's all I can say."

He said, "Well, I've followed this brook maybe a mile and it doesn't seem to be getting much narrower. I might follow it all day like this." Then he kind of sized up the tree as if he was trying to make up his mind what to do. He said, "I don't want to be leading you fellows away from the path."

"I'm not a Silver Fox and so I can advise you to do it," Pee-wee said. "Gee whiz, we want to get to the toll-gate and eat."

"There's many a true word spoken by a pest," I said.

Warde said, "Don't bother about us, you go ahead and do whatever you want to, Dink." Dinkey said, "Well, I'm going to do it."

"Where you go, we follow," I said.

"Go ahead, don't you be scared," said Pee-wee. So then Dinkey shinned up

the tree to the branch that stuck away out, that was the third one up. If he could get to the end of it, it would let him down far enough so he could drop to the ground, I could see that. Then he began scrambling out on the long branch and we all stood watching him.

“That fellow’s going to make one peach of a scout all right,” Warde said.

“You bet he is,” I answered back. “That’s about the only way anybody could get across around here, that’s sure. I guess he’d have to follow the blamed stream for miles before he’d find another way.”

“Yes, and he didn’t want to do that on account of making us hike forever,” Warde said. “He’s one fine fellow all right.”

“That shows he’s a good scout, because he’s thinking of us,” Pee-wee said. “Gee whiz, we won’t be so long getting to the old toll-gate, hey? I bet we’ll be eating in half an hour, hey?”

All of a sudden, *good night*, I heard a splitting sound and a kind of a crash, and there was Dinkey sitting on the opposite shore laughing and holding on to a piece of the tree that had broken off. That big limb must have been rotten where it joined the trunk. Anyway, it did the trick for Dinkey. It let him down before it broke close to the trunk and the other part that branched out from that was in his hands.



ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE WAS A SPLITTING SOUND AND A KIND OF A CRACK.

“I made a fine landing,” he shouted.

“Are you hurt?” I called.

“Not so you’d notice it,” he called back. “Where there’s a will there’s a couple of black and blue spots.”

He looked awful funny sitting there with the breeze blowing his hair all loose. “The branch sprang down and the breeze is springing up,” he said.

Warde said, “I’m wondering now how *we’re* going to get over there. I suppose we’ll have to walk about ten miles on this side and back on the other, even if we’re lucky.”

“Yes, and he’s got the lunches too!” Pee-wee screamed. “Do you talk about luck? He’s got the lunches with him, mine too. You were such a fool to be playing baseball with them, now you see what’s happened!”

Dinkey called over to us, “I think the best plan now is for me to go on to the toll-gate, cut my initials there, then eat my lunch, and come back to here.”

But jiminy crinkums, I couldn’t answer him, I was just rolling on the ground laughing and laughing and every time I looked at Pee-wee I laughed more and more.

Warde said, “The plot seems to be growing thicker. Anyway the lunches got over even if we didn’t.”

## CHAPTER X

### SOMETHING COMES BETWEEN US

Oh, boy, I had to laugh! There was Dinkey sitting on the grass across the brook holding on to a piece of tree that had broken off and rocking from one side to the other, laughing. And there were Warde and I squatting on the ground on the other side, laughing too. And there was Scout Harris shouting over to Dinkey that he shouldn't go away.

He was shouting, "As long as we can't get to the old toll-gate now, you throw three of the lunches over here and you needn't say you can't do it, because anyway if you're going to be a scout you've got to know how to throw. Even Roy will tell you that even if he's crazy! Do you think we're going to sit here and starve? I knew everything would get all mixed up."

"United we stand, divided we sprawl," I said. "All is confusion and everything is where it shouldn't be—this is some pilgrimage to a shrine!"

"You're to blame for it," the kid hollered at me.

Dinkey shouted, "I can't throw anything over there on account of the wind being this way."

I said, "That isn't the wind, it's Pee-wee shouting."

"The wind is getting strong," Dinkey called.

"Yes, and we'll be getting weak," Pee-wee yelled at him.

"Well, anyway I got over all right, didn't I?" Dinkey said. "You've got to hand it to me."

"*Hand what to you?*" the kid screamed. "Haven't you got everything already? You've got a—a—a monopoly!"

"He means a monopoly," I said.

"I don't care what I mean," Pee-wee kept up. "What are we going to do now, that's what I'd like to know?"

Warde said, "That *would* be interesting to know."

"If we keep on following along the shore of this river," the kid said, "maybe we'll have to go miles and miles and miles hunting for a place to cross. And then we'll have to come miles and miles and miles back along the other side before we get in the path again. Do you mean to tell me that we could follow this stream maybe for miles and then go straight to the toll-gate from the place we cross?"

"If we knew where it was we could," I told him.

"But as long as we don't know where it is from there, how could we do it?" he shouted.

Dinkey called across and said, "I don't see any use of me following the stream on this side. If you can't get over here I might as well hike straight on to the toll-gate. Or I'll just sit here and wait for you to get to me," he said.

"Yes, and you'll eat while you're waiting too, I bet you will," Pee-wee called back at him.

I said, "Well, this is the end of a perfect nightmare. It's the finest pilgrimage I ever didn't take. I knew something would come between us."

Warde said, "Well, what's the use of hanging around here? Actions speak louder than words——"

"Not than mine!" Pee-wee piped up.

"Keep still and follow your leader," I told him. "Come on and we'll hunt for another place to cross."

"Make him promise he won't eat," Pee-wee said to me.

I winked at Warde and I said, "I have no authority over him till after he's a Silver Fox and he won't be a Silver Fox till he cuts his initials in the toll-gate—it's a legal technology."

"Go ahead," Dinkey called, "I'll hang around till you get here. Maybe I'll eat a very brief lunch out of the brief-case."

So then we started off along the shore hunting for some way to get across. There were a lot of ways only they weren't there. Jimmies, I have to admit we were kind of tired by that time. And sort of it made me more tired because I knew we weren't going toward the old toll-gate. We were going to it by going away from it, so the nearer we got to it the further we were away from it, I mean the more we hiked the more we didn't get anywhere, that's what I mean.

But anyway I knew we were going upstream and I thought that pretty soon the river would be getting narrower. I said, "Maybe if we go far enough we'll get to where it rises and all we'll have to do is to step across."

Warde said, "It's lucky we're not walking the other way or we'd step into the ocean."

But just the same the river didn't get narrower upstream, it got wider. I'm so smart, I'll tell you why. It was because down where Dinkey got across it went through a kind of a narrow gully sort of, and I guess that's why it went so fast. Pretty soon it was good and wide and not running so fast, it was just kind of walking.

Warde said, "Here would be a good place to get across if we only had something to get across on."

"Sure," I said. "If we had some eggs we'd have some ham and eggs if we only had some ham."

"I mean it's nice and quiet here," Warde said. "Sure," I told him, "Pee-wee hasn't said anything in about four seconds and three minutes." Warde said, "I mean it's not rough."

“Oh, I see a dandy log,” Pee-wee shouted.

I looked where he pointed and I saw a log in the woods. “And there’s another,” I said. “Oh, boy, this is a cinch,” I said merrily, merrily with gladness in my heart. “We can make a raft.”

“We’re in luck,” Warde said. “I bet we’re only about a mile from where Dinkey is.”

So then I said, “I guess they were chopping trees here, lucky for us. Now we can make a noise like real scouts making a raft like pioneers used to do, fixing a couple of logs together and getting across.”

“It’s dandy because we got to use our resources!” Pee-wee shouted; “it’s better than a boat even. Now we can show Dinkey how scouts do, hey?”

## CHAPTER XI

### NAVAL WARFARE

Then we reminded ourselves of regular scouts hauling logs and making rafts like in Kentucky on the frontiers. First we rolled a log down to the shore, then we rolled another one down, and then we got some long, thin pieces of willow. Then we rolled the logs into the water and tied them together. It wasn't so good, but, anyway, they stayed together. One good thing, there was a place where the men had built a fire and right there we found a big iron hoop that went around a big fat barrel once, I guess. It was all rusty so we could bend it nice and easy. It just fitted around those two logs and that was what really held them together best. They made a dandy raft.

Ward said it was a peach of a raft only it was kind of more like a submarine. We took our shoes and stockings off, because when we stepped on the logs they went down under the water three or four inches. We put our stockings in our pockets and each of us tied our shoes together by the shoe-strings and hung them around our necks. I guess we looked funny. There was a hole in one of the logs, I guess it was a rotten place, and I stuffed my patrol scarf into it.

I said, "That's to prevent the water from getting into the log."

"You're crazy!" Pee-wee said. "The log isn't hollow, that's only a hole in it."

I said, "If the water gets into that hole it might sink the log."

"The best way would be to cut the hole out," Warde said. Then we both stood there kind of studying it.

I said, "The trouble is that would leave a bigger hole and we'd have to cut that out too." Warde said, "Yes, and pretty soon the hole would be bigger than the log. Then we'd have to build the log up to it sort of."

I said, "I think my way is better."

"Are you going to stop that crazy nonsense?" Pee-wee started. "Are we going to go across or not?"

Then Warde said, "I don't think this blamed raft will hold the three of us. But two of us will have to go across so one can bring it back."

"We'll pole it, hey?" I said.

Pee-wee and Warde stood on it and it almost tipped over. I saw that only two could go on it. I said, "You two go, and kneel down on it, don't you care if you get a little wet, the upper part of you will stay dry."

"We can't pole it while we're kneeling," Warde said.

“Well, then, each paddle with one hand and you’ll get across,” I told them.

Boy, it was awful funny to see them start across. It was a pretty tippy raft, I’ll say that. The two of them kneeled on it and stayed down as low as they could. I couldn’t see the logs at all because they were under water. It looked as if Pee-wee and Warde were kind of squatting on the water.

“Don’t move and don’t speak and you’ll make it,” I shouted to them; “keep your balance.” Neither one of them said a word, they just paddled very carefully with their hands. Pretty soon they were across. Warde crawled ashore and got himself kind of wet, but he should worry. Then Pee-wee started back to get me.

I shouted, “There’s a long line of one scout waiting at this ferry. Hurry up. Hurrah for the Silver Foxes! I’ll say we have some resources.”

“You mean hurrah for the Chipmunks,” Pee-wee called. “Didn’t I do it as much as you? *Gee whiz!*”

Then all of a sudden just to show he didn’t have any use for my nonsense he reached out and pulled my patrol scarf out of the hole in the log. That end of the log was out of the water. *Good night, Magnolia!* Up flew a lot of bees out of the hole, good and mad. Gee williger, you couldn’t blame them. *Oh, boy*, did Pee-wee start shouting! He called, “It’s a whole nest of bees, they’re flying all around and stinging me! Some are wet and they’re walking because they can’t fly!”

“Hurry up and paddle over here,” I said.

“How can I paddle when I have to be waving both hands?” he yelled. “Haven’t you got any sense? Some of them are crawling on me and I can’t wave them away.”

All the while he was trying to do forty-’leven things at once and the raft was almost tipping over with him. He was waving my scarf with one hand and brushing the bees off himself with the other and kind of balancing the raft like a man on a tight rope.

“Can’t you see I have to be using both hands?” he yelled.

I said, “That’s a very good argument. I see the point.”

He said, “Yes, and you’d feel it too if you were here—OUCH!”

All the while Warde was sitting on the opposite shore laughing and screaming—honest, once he fell over backwards he was laughing so hard.

“There’s one in my mouth and one in my ear,” the kid hollered for all he was worth. “They’re crawling all over me, the wet ones. I got stung on my—OUCH—I got—OUCH—on my neck—OUCH!”

“Keep your mouth shut,” Warde called to him.

“Look out, you’ll tip over,” I shouted.

*Oh, jiminies*, I can’t tell you about it. One second his finger was in his ear, then he was kicking with his leg and waving with both hands, and just



managing to keep his balance, and shouting all the time. I couldn't help it, I just rolled on the ground and laughed and laughed and laughed. Even I didn't laugh so much when Pee-wee fell off the fence in the Bee-line Hike. I guess maybe you remember that, anyway you didn't miss much, because it was crazy.

All of a sudden the kid shouted, "I've got a dandy idea!"

"You'd better keep it under cover," I said.

"It's—OUCH, OUCH!" he yelled.

I couldn't see very well just what he was doing, but I saw him tear pages out of his hike book and light them with a match and stick them in his pocket. Then the next thing I knew his jacket was all flaming and he was waving it around over his head and you can bet the bees went flying away.

"Now I got them good and scared," he shouted.

When the jacket was almost burned up he stuffed it into the wet hole and thick smoke came out that was even worse than the flame. It looked like a steamer crossing the ocean.

I shouted, "Come on, now you can paddle over."

"The raft won't move," he shouted back, "it's caught on something, but anyway I chased the bees away with scout resources. Did you see me?"

"I sure did," I called to him.

"There's only some wet ones left," he called, "and they don't sting when they're wet, but they crawl into your ears and like that. I bet they'll be good and mad when they get dry, hey?"

## CHAPTER XII

### A FIRM RESOLVE

I bet you're saying that was some pilgrimage, hey? Talk about scouts getting together for a hike! Please excuse me while I drop dead laughing. We hung together, only not so you'd notice it. There was Dinkey on the other side of the river about a mile away. And there was Warde on the other side opposite where I was. And there was the big bee killer and marine scout stuck in the middle of the stream. And there was I laughing my head off on the opposite side, but anyway you couldn't say which was the opposite side now, because we were on both sides, I should worry. In the middle and on both sides. We were all together in different places.

I shouted, "Are you coming over to get me or not? Move to the end of the raft and it'll float off."

So that's what he did and then he paddled over all right and I poled the raft back again with the two of us and we fastened it to the shore because we would want to use it coming back.

Pretty soon the three of us were hiking back along the other side of the stream to get to Dinkey. Pee-wee had to stop and mix earth up with water and make mud to put on the places where the bees had stung him. He put patches of mud on his face and his neck and his arms. Gee, he looked awfully funny.

He said, "You can bet I'll never name a patrol after busy bees. Gee whiz, I was going to name the Chipmunks that, but I'm glad I didn't. But anyway, I thought up a scout way to get rid of them all right, didn't I?"

"You sure did," I told him, "and you got rid of your scout jacket too."

He said, "I bet it would have been good if Dinkey had seen me do it, hey? Then he'd have seen the way scouts do, hey, when they're in peril?"

"Sure," Warde told him, "and he'd have seen the way bees do it. It's very interesting studying the bees."

I said, "Look out, kid, some mud is dribbling down from your cheek into your mouth."

"He doesn't care, he'll eat anything," Warde said.

"Olive oil is good for bee stings," the kid said, all the time while he was hiking along, very big and important on account of his big stunt. "I got some olive oil in my brief-case, maybe it isn't exactly olive oil, but it's the juice that olives come in. I guess I ought to put some of that on the stings, hey?"

I said, "Listen here, kid. We've been shouting a lot about eats, just kidding each other. If you want to open your lunch when we get to Dinkey and get that

oil out, go ahead and do it. Jiminies, if you can stop those places from hurting I say do it. Hey, Warde?"

"Surest thing you know," Warde said.

"Then we'll all eat," I said, "because we'll be good and hungry, and tired too."

I felt kind of sorry for the kid. Gee, I had to laugh at him, but I felt sorry too. He sure had been up against it. But anyway there's one thing he likes even better than food, and that's being a hero. I couldn't help laughing at him seeing him stride along with that bold walk he has, with dabs of mud all over him and some of them dribbling down. I guess he reminded himself of Robin Hood licking about a hundred sheriffs or something or other all at once.

All of a sudden he was very big and important. He said, "Do you think I'm going to be a quitter? *Geeeee whiz*, did I quit when the bees started at me? Didn't they quit first, I leave it to Warde?"

"Absolutely," Warde said; "they were really the ones that got stung—only they didn't know it."

"No, sireeee," Pee-wee said very firm like. "All we did so far was talk a lot of crazy talk, but I wasn't the one anyway. I bet Dinkey thinks scouts are nothing but lunatics."

"That shows how observant he is," I said.

"Anyway," the kid said, "I'm going to be the one to be a real scout anyway and let him see."

"Explain all that," I said. "I think you're entirely wrong, but I agree with you. Warde doesn't either."

"That's just what I mean," Pee-wee said, "the way you talk."

I said, "There's nothing mean about us, we don't mean anything."

He said, very high and mighty, "Talk don't count so much. The only ones that did anything so far are Dinkey and I——"

"And the bees," I said. "Don't forget the bees."

"He's going to see me keep our pledge," the kid said. "You needn't think I'm going to be the one to break it. I'm not going to eat *one single thing till I get to the toll-gate*. Every time you get a new fellow you start making a fool out of him with a lot of crazy talk and stuff. Gee whiz, scouting is scouting, that's what I say."

"No, it isn't," I said; "that's where you're mistaken."

"Anyway," Pee-wee said, "now there's nothing to stop us, let's hike straight to the toll-gate and keep the pledge we made. Even I wouldn't open my lunch even to get some oil out, I wouldn't, *absolutely, positively*."

Warde was laughing. I said, "You hear that, Warde? We're going to keep our pledge."

"Absolutely, positively," Pee-wee said. "*I'm not going to eat till I get to*

*the toll-gate, I don't care what."*

"That's what I call scouting," Warde said.

"And we're going to have some sense," Pee-wee said.

"Where are you going to get it?" I asked him.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EYES THAT SEE

Dinke was sitting just where we left him. He was sitting against a tree with his knees up, taking it easy. He called to us, "It's nice being a scout."

"You're not a scout yet," Pee-wee shouted back at him. "You got to get to the old toll-gate without eating first."

I said, "Did you hear the latest news, Dink? We're going to keep the pledge, orders of P. Harris. He's so keen about it now that he's going to keep it twice at the same time. Even when he eats he's not going to enjoy it, he says." So then we told him all about our thrilling adventures and how Pee-wee defeated a whole flying corps with one scout jacket. After we rested a little while we started off again along where the old road used to be, only after you pass the river it's only a kind of a trail. Oh, boy, it must have been a long time ago when that road was a turnpike. We hiked and hiked and hiked, and we got good and tired. And hungry too.

After about an hour the road got to be more like a road again; so then I knew we were coming to Dumboro, that's a village. Anyway it thinks it is. My father said it used to be a pretty big town, but I guess they left it out in the rain and it shrank.

Pee-wee said, "Now I can tell we're coming to Dumboro, and when we pass through Dumboro we come to the old toll-gate, and you bet I'll be good and glad. I'm tired, and I'm hungry too."

I told him, I said, "Dumboro is at least a mile and a half from here. We have to walk on tiptoe through it so as not to wake it up."

All of a sudden Pee-wee started running after something that was blowing around in the woods. He was showing off to Dinkey how scouts are supposed to pick up refuse and papers and things. Then, *good night*, over he came to us with what he had been chasing. It was an old piece of cloth with some red printing on it. It was all wet and dirty and sort of stringy from being wet. But the kid had pulled it out straight so we could see what it was. And I saw how it had two words printed on it in red letters; they said FORTUNES OLD.

"Now you see it's good I picked it up," Pee-wee was saying, "because it's a clew, it's a dandy clew."

"Explain all that," I said to him.

"What do we want of an old fortune?" Warde said. "If we can't have a nice new one, we don't want any at all."

I said, "You take an old one, it gets all worn out and out of date and what

good is it?"

"An antique fortune might be nice for a curiosity," Dinkey said; he was getting as crazy as the rest of us.

"You told me to explain and then you go on shouting a lot of nonsense!" the kid yelled at me.

"Geeee whiz! Even Dinkey——"

I said, "Have a care, Scout Harris, you're speaking of one of my candied dates."

"What?" he shouted.

"Candidates," I shot back at him. "It's derived from the Latin word *can* and the Chinese word *date*; the *did* is silent like the B in hash. There are lots of old fortunes."

"It means *fortunes told!*" our young hero screamed. "The T is smeared out \_\_\_\_\_"

"That's different," I said. "Why didn't you tell us that in the first place?"

"Do you know what it means?" Pee-wee shouted.

"It means that the T got washed out," Warde said. All the time Dinkey was laughing. Gee, I just liked to watch that fellow laugh.

"It means that gypsies were camping somewhere in these woods," the kid said, "because I can deduce it on account of gypsies telling fortunes. That shows how you have to have your eyes open."

"And your mouth," I said.

"You have to keep being observant all the time no matter where you go," the head Chip said, all the while looking at Dinkey. "Because when you're out in the woods everything means something if you only see it."

I said, "It means just as much if you don't see it, even if it's invincible to the naked eye. Look at Brent Gaylong, he wears spectacles and he hasn't got naked eyes at all, and look what he sees; he sees to the new members up in camp. A scout is supposed to keep his head high and yet they want you to see things on the ground. Jiminy crinkums we'd all be Ben Turpins if we went by the Handbook."

"That's very true," Brent said. "I never thought of that."

Dinkey said, kind of laughing, "Maybe it's one of those teckinalities."

The kid just stood there dangling his old dirty rag; he was so mad he couldn't even speak. If he tried to speak it would come out in chunks.

I said, "Why should it be called the Handbook at all when it tells of a lot of feats for scouts to do? You look in it and see. Why shouldn't it be called the feet-book instead of the Handbook? It's just the same as having a merit badge for bee culture. If bees had any culture do you suppose they'd have stung Pee-wee? It's like giving a fellow the astronomy badge just because he's a star scout—I'll leave it to Dinkey."

“*Are you going to listen?*” Pee-wee screamed with all his might. “There were gypsies camped around here and this proves it!”

I said, “Well, how can we stop them from camping here after they’ve gone away? I should worry about gypsies.”

“Here’s where their wagon was,” the kid said. “Do you see those ruts in the ground?”

“You mean caramel,” I told him; “gypsy caramel, not wagon.”

“It was a gypsy caravan,” he said, “and they were camped right under that big elm tree. I can see where they had their camp-fire. We’re supposed to study all around for all kinds of signs and everything.”

“Haven’t you got one sign already?” Warde asked him. “How about the old toll-gate and the eats?”

So then we started off again through the woods, the kid hanging on to that old rag he had picked up. He was so mad that he wouldn’t speak to us. Dinkey was laughing.

I said, “A scout is supposed to smile and look pleasant.”

“Not when he’s with a lot of lunatics,” the kid said.

“We’re more to be pitied than blamed,” I told him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ROUGH ARM OF THE LAW

When we came out of the woods and started along to where a white house was, I knew we were getting to Dumboro. From the river all through the woods that road you couldn't hardly see it at all, but near the town it gets to be a road again.

"It goes to Dumboro," Pee-wee said to Dinkey. He wasn't exactly mad at him.

I said, "It doesn't go to Dumboro."

"Do you mean to say this road doesn't go through Dumboro?" Pee-wee shouted at me.

"It doesn't go anywhere, it stays right where it is," I said. "It hasn't moved in about fifty years. You mean *we're* going to Dumboro. Trying to deceive Dinkey just because he's a new scout! If you can't talk sense keep still."

"*Me!* Talk SENSE?" Pee-wee screeched.

"And don't misrepresent things," I told him.

Oh, jiminies, weren't we good and tired as we hiked into Dumboro. The old turnpike we were on used to be the main street of Dumboro. That's where all the stores used to be, only there didn't use to be any stores. But now another road is the main street and we knew we were in Dumboro because there was a sign up that said YOU ARE NOW IN DUMBORO. That was so people would know they were in a place.

Dinkey said, "Well, one thing sure, I think I've earned my membership in the Silver Fox Patrol; I was never so tired in my life. The farthest place away from any given post is Dumboro."

"It's even farther than that," I told him.

"He thinks he's smart saying *given post*," the kid piped up.

"I don't care whether you give it or let it or sell it, it's the farthest place."

"You mean from anywhere else," I said.

He said, "Sure, and I'm so hungry I could eat a package of tacks."

I said, "I'm sorry I haven't got a tack with me. Don't you care, we'll be there soon now." All of a sudden out burst our little hero merrily, merrily. He shouted, "We'll be there in ten minutes. It's just outside of the other end of the town, and when I get there I'm going to sit and rest for an hour, even after I eat, I don't care how late it is, because there isn't any pledge about how long we'll sit and rest. We'd have been there two hours ago only for Roy moping along and talking a lot of nonsense."



I said, “Shhh, the first thing you know you’ll wake up Dumboro.”

But, oh, boy, Dumboro was awake that day all right.

In front of the post office was a big post. I suppose that’s why they call it a post office. They have a bulletin-board on that post. There were five or six people standing there reading a paper that was tacked up. As soon as Pee-wee read it, he started jumping up and down. Afterwards I got that paper so you can see just exactly what it said.

\$500.00 REWARD

will be paid to any one giving information leading to the discovery, dead or alive, of Skipleigh Ware, aged nine, of Dumboro. Disappeared on Tuesday, June 27th. Wore white shirt, gray knickerbockers, high tan shoes. Has light curly hair. Was last seen at 4 p.m. on Tuesday in neighborhood of Berry’s Pond.

Warde tried to keep Pee-wee quiet. He said, “Don’t shout in front of everybody. If you think you’ve got a clew, keep still.”

“Sure,” I said, “don’t start talking, wait till we tell you.”

I had to laugh at him because that’s always the way it is with Pee-wee. He’s always stumbling into things. There he stood gaping at the notice, with the old wet rag sticking out of his pocket. All of a sudden a big fat man with a badge on his suspenders pushed the kid out of the way and went into the post office. He had two big bloodhounds on a chain. One of them even kind of sniffed at me.

“Hey, don’t get so fresh, you!” Pee-wee shouted in after the man.

Jiminies, I couldn’t exactly blame the kid because that man bumped right against him and pushed him out of the way and there was Pee-wee picking up his hat and brushing it off—he was good and mad.

“You—big—fat—big—dunce!” he shouted.

“Keep still, will you!” I said.

All the time Warde had his arm around Pee-wee and was trying to keep him quiet. The kid isn’t afraid of anybody, when he gets good and mad, I’ll say that.

I guess the constable, or whatever he was, wasn’t so awful mad about what Pee-wee said. Anyway, he was pretty busy inside. I could hear them in there talking about taking the dogs down to the pond and trying to have them pick up the scent, because now they were pretty sure that kid wasn’t in the pond. That’s the way it seemed to me. There was a lady in there, too, and she was all excited.

All of a sudden the man came out again and the dogs were pulling hard, so he had to walk faster than he wanted to. It looked as if everybody was going to follow the man. All the kids around there started after him. There was another man, too, and he said, “We don’t want these kids tagging along.”

So then the man that had the badge and the dogs turned around and said good and mad sort of, he said, "All you youngsters get along home with you, *get along with you there, double quick!*"

Jiminy, that's what makes me mad, to be chased away from a place by a grown-up person. I'll go away if they want me to, but anyway it makes me good and mad to be chased. Our scoutmaster said don't ever run for anybody. Walk away and be manly about it, but don't run. That's just what he said, I'll leave it to Warde if he didn't. But, *jumping jiminies*, any fellow will get mad if you maul him, I don't care what.

There were about a dozen kids following those men; I guess, especially kind of, we were interested in the bloodhounds—oh, boy, they were some beasts!

I said to Warde, "I bet they'd eat you up in about a minute."

He said, "Please don't mention the subject of eats."

Just then the man turned around again and saw us all standing and gaping just where we had stopped when he wouldn't let us follow any more. Only Pee-wee was nearer to them than we were; he was kind of still following them a little bit, the poor kid.

The big man with the badge walked back, awful mad like, and he grabbed Pee-wee good and hard by the collar and turned him around and gave him so much of a shove that the kid went sprawling on the ground. "When I says a thing I mean it," the man shouted at him.

Pee-wee jumped up with his clothes all dirty and his hat off and his curly hair all flying loose. *Jiminetty*, but he was mad. "You—you big—you big fool of a coward!" Pee-wee hollered at him. And he said something else too. Gee, I didn't blame him.

"What's that?" the man said.

By that time Warde and Dinkey and I had gone up to where Pee-wee was. I said, "If you don't want us to go with you, you don't have to let us. But you don't have to knock any of us down. He wasn't interested in you anyway, he was interested in the dogs."

Warde and I tried to keep Pee-wee quiet, but we couldn't. He yelled after the man, "You big coward knocking somebody down under your size. It shows how smart you are, because I know where for certain—maybe—but, anyway, I'm pretty sure where that kid is—do you see this?"

"Put that in your pocket and shut up," I whispered to him. "Maybe we can do something big."

"I'll make a fool of something big," Pee-wee shouted. "Do you see this?" he called after the man, all the while pulling the old rag out of his pocket. "It says fortunes told and I found it in the woods and it's a clew—it shows where gypsies were camped so they probably kidnaped that boy and all the while

you're going somewhere else, because you're a big fool because it shows anyway boy scouts know more than you do! So now you think you're so smart, you big dunce!"

"Now you went and did it," Warde whispered to him, while the man was coming back again.

"Let's have that thing," the man said awful mad and loud.

All the kids that were standing around were good and scared, I guess.

## CHAPTER XV

### PEE-WEE LOSES HIS CLEW BUT NOT HIS TONGUE

Honest, that was just like Pee-wee. When he first picked up that old piece of cloth in the woods we kidded him about it just like you saw, because even if gypsies had been camped around there, what difference did it make? When it comes to mysteries and clews and things like that, Pee-wee eats them alive.

But, *boy*, when we read that notice in the post office, then it was different. Maybe some gypsies *had* kidnaped that boy for all we knew. When we read that notice, then, all of a sudden, maybe that old cloth did mean something. That was what *I* was thinking. I could see that was what Warde and Dinkey were thinking too. But, oh, jiminy, that was Pee-wee all over. He stumbled into something that might have meant a big thing for all of us and then he went and spoiled it all by shouting. I guess he wanted all those kids that were standing around to see that he wasn't scared.

Warde said to the man, "That belongs to us and you let him alone."

But it was too late because now the men were both interested on account of what Pee-wee said. The big man opened the cloth out and saw how it said FORTUNES OLD.

"Looks pretty good, eh?" the other man said. The big man could hardly stand still on account of the dogs pulling him. He said, "Where'd you youngsters git this?"

I didn't see how it was any use trying to keep Pee-wee quiet, because he had spoiled everything anyway, so we just let him shout on.

He said—jiminies, but I had to laugh—he said, "I picked it up in the woods and I bet you haven't got sense enough to know that gypsies steal children, I bet you haven't, and this town's got a name—Dumboro—only it's blind too—and I bet if you find those gypsies you'll find that fellow and I bet you don't give the bloodhounds any credit either and you're a big dunce knocking fellows down under your size, anyway I'm not a-scared of you anyway and I'd follow you anyway if I wanted to, only I'm going to have my lunch!"

"Sure, we should worry," I said.

"We found it along where the old turnpike was," Pee-wee kept shouting, "and anyway you told us to mind our own business so we'll do it, *so now!*"

"The old turnpike?" the other man asked us.

"Sure, we should worry," I said; "a fellow named Skip Ware would never stay home anyway. Go on and find him. We've got something better to do, hey, Warde?"

“Geeeeeee whiz, you bet,” said Pee-wee.

Then we all started along. I guess we caused more excitement in Dumbell, or whatever they call it, than even Skippy Ware did.

Warde said, “I bet it will be in the newspaper to-night.”

“Geeeeeee whiz, I was good and mad,” Pee-wee said.

“Yes, and you were good and crazy too,” I shot back at him. “You found an old cloth sign that didn’t mean anything except that maybe gypsies had been in the woods. Then we find out a kid is missing and they’ve hunted everywhere for him. All of a sudden that clew means something, and you haul it out of your pocket and start waving it like a patrol pennant and tell all you know. Now I bet they’ll trace those gypsies and get the kid and they’ll get all the credit and everything.”

“And we lose five hundred dollars,” Warde said.

Pee-wee didn’t say anything, just hiked along, and then he said, “I was good and mad, I was—*geeee whiz!*”

I said, “All you had to do was to keep still. We could have gone to see maybe the scoutmaster here, or somebody or other, who would have let them use the clew and just the same give us the credit.”

“Sure,” Dinkey said, “because that notice said the reward was for *information* that would *lead* them to find the kid. Now we won’t get any credit. I guess we lost a big chance.”

“Sure,” I said, “don’t ever tell me talk is cheap. It cost Pee-wee five hundred dollars not to keep still. He used about five hundred words, say a dollar a word. There’s your five hundred dollars.”

“Mine!” Warde said.

“Sure,” I said, “and one of those words was worth more than a dollar; did you hear it?”

“It was a two-dollar-and-seventy-five-cent word,” Dinkey said.

“I was good and mad,” the kid said.

I said, “Well, it’s all over now but the shouting.”

“I was hoping that was over too,” Warde said.

Dinkey said, “It’s all over but the eating.”

“Now you’re shouting,” I said.

“No more shouting,” said Warde. “We should worry about Slippery which or whatever his name is. Only we spilled our nice little clew and now we don’t do a big stunt.”

“Pee-wee lost his temper and five hundred dollars,” I said. “I know just what the newspaper will say; it will say a rag that furnished a clew was picked up by some children playing in the woods and Constable Something or Other was successful in tracing the yah, yah, yah, yah, yah, and deserves great credit for his acute yah, yah, yah, yah, *bunk!*”

Pee-wee didn't say anything, he just trudged along. I guess he was feeling kind of sorry, because he likes to be a hero all right.

"Sometimes even when I fail, I succeed," he said.

"Explain all that," I said to him.

"Maybe I'll do something even better than that," he said.

"Something big, hey?" Warde said.

"Anyway, I'm going to eat next," the kid told us. "I'm going to eat lunch, no matter what."

"That ought to be something big," I said to him, "if it's anything like your lunches usually are."

## CHAPTER XVI AROUND THE BEND

While we were going through the village three or four of those kids kept following us. I guess they thought Pee-wee was a kind of a hero because he talked back to that constable or whatever he was. A couple of women came running the other way and one said, "Of course it's the gypsies! Find them and they'll have the young one, sure as you're born." The kids turned around and followed the women. Looking back, I could see other people coming out of houses and going with those women. Boy, but the whole town was waking up, all right.

I guess Pee-wee was kind of sorry, but anyway he just hiked along looking very fierce.

I said, "Well, anyway, it's good that we passed through Dumboro. I guess we put them on the right track all right. Come ahead, we should worry."

Warde said, "It's a wonder to me they didn't make us go and show them just where we picked up the piece of cloth."

"Oh, the woods are not so big," I said. "Probably the gypsies went along the old turnpike because that's the only way they could go through the woods. Those dogs will track them all right." Dinkey said, "I'd laugh if they got to Bridgeboro and our cops stopped them before that big man catches them."

I said, "Sure, when catching kidnapers patronize your own home town."

"I don't care, I can do lots more things," Pee-wee said.

"Sure," I told him, "you can eat; that's what we're going to do next."

Warde said it was good we were showing Dinkey what a Silver Fox pledge means or else we'd sit down alongside the road and eat, we were so tired and hungry.

I said, "The great seal of the Silver Foxes cannot be broken till we get to the old toll-gate and Dinkey cuts his initials."

"I wouldn't eat till I got to the toll-gate no matter what," Pee-wee piped up. "But then you just watch me."

"We'll be too busy," Dinkey said. Then he wanted to know if it was far.

I said, "Are you weakening?"

He said, "I'm not weakening, but I'm getting weak."

"It's the same thing, only different," I said.

"It's only about a half a mile," Pee-wee told him.

But, believe me, it was a good long half a mile. Then we came to a turn in the road and I knew we were almost there. I knew as soon as we got around

that turn we'd see a road branching off from the one we were on and between those two roads we'd see the little triangle, all grass, and the old toll-gate standing on it.

I said, "When we get to it you have to follow me while I march around it eight times, once for each member of my patrol——"

"That's not the rule!" Pee-wee shouted. "The rule is only about not eating till we get there."

I said, "Just a minute, you don't get me——"

"I don't want you!" he shouted. "All I know is I'm going to eat as soon as I get there, I don't care what."

"Why don't you eat some grass then, as long as you don't care what?" Warde asked him.

"Because I'm good and tired and I'm not a crazy insane lunatic like all your patrol."

I said, "Those are harsh words, Scout Harris."

"Don't you care, kid," Warde said to him, "you did your good turn to-day; you were a generous scout, you gave your clew to a poor, big, fat gentleman who needed it. That was a kind act. You as much as gave away five hundred dollars."

"That was a generous act," I said; "Pee-wee is a true scout."

So then I started singing:

"Oh, where, oh, where, is Skippy Ware?  
We do not know, we do not care.

"He may be far, he may be near,  
But one thing sure, he isn't here.

"To hike some more we could not bear,  
We're nearly there, we're nearly there!"

And just then we went kind of marching around the bend in the road and there was the three-cornered grass-plot. But the old toll-gate wasn't there.



## CHAPTER XVII THE GREAT SEAL

The wooden bench outside it was there, only it wasn't beside it, because the old toll-gate wasn't there. The seat looked awful funny standing there all alone.

"*Good night*, what do you know about that!" I said. The three of them just stood there gaping, especially Pee-wee. He just kept gaping. Then he said, "Where do you suppose it is? This is the place all right."

I said, "Sure, you can see that bare spot where it stood."

"*Geeeeeeeeeee whiz!*" the kid kind of moaned out.

Warde said, "The plot grows thinner. What are we going to do now?"

"Maybe it's just gone out for a walk and will be right back," Dinkey said.

"It didn't leave any note," I told him.

Pee-wee started hollering at us, "*Will you shut up with your crazy stuff and say what we're going to do now?*"

"We're going to sit down," I told him. "We didn't make any pledge not to sit down."

So then we all sat down in a row on the bench. It didn't have any back to it because the back to it was the building. *Oh, gee*, it was good to sit down. I started singing:

"Four little boy scouts sitting in a row  
Can't eat their eats yet, don't know where to go."

Warde said, "There's nothing to do but wait, maybe it will come back. Lots of toll-gates go away and come back."

"Sure," I said. "There's a movie play, *Why Toll-gates Leave Home*."

"Believe me, this ought to be in the movies," Dinkey said. "I don't suppose I can get to be a scout now."

"Oh, positively not," I said. "I'm sorry, but the unexpected disappearance of the toll-gate changes everything."

Warde said, "It must be somewhere."

I said, "You can't tell, maybe it isn't there at all; it may be somewhere else. What do you say we tell some riddles? How many is six doughnuts?"

Warde said, "Here's a stunt you can't do. Open your mouth wide and say *fish*."

I said, "That's easy; what's between a jelly roll?"

Pee-wee said, kind of grouchy, "A jelly roll and what?"

"Just a jelly roll," I said. "Let's talk about ham sandwiches. Do negroes eat

white bread?"

"Sure they do," Warde said. "The same as a white person can have a black career; I'll leave it to Pee-wee. If a book is read why should a sad story make you blue?"

I guess we were so disappointed and tired that we felt silly.

"Will you shut up your crazy nonsense and say if we're going to eat?" Pee-wee yelled.

"First answer me a question," I said.

"What is it?" he asked me.

"If you tear a hole in your stocking what becomes of the part of the stocking that was in that hole? The smartest man in the world can't answer that."

"Are we going to eat?" Pee-wee shouted.

I said, "Do you want me to think up the answer to that?"

"It's not a riddle!" he screeched at me.

Warde and Dinkey were laughing so hard they almost fell back off the seat.

I said, "Remember the building isn't there, you fellows. If you want to lean back against the toll-gate building you may have to lean back several hundred miles, even less."

"That's one thing about an octagon building," Warde said, "it isn't on the square. It sneaks off."

"That's very true," I told him. "That's why I don't trust a ham sandwich, it's two-sided."

Honest, I wish you could have seen Dinkey. He just sat there moving back and forth and laughing so hard I thought he'd go kerflop over backwards. That's one thing about Dinkey everybody likes—all the fellows in the troop—the way he laughs. Jiminies, that fellow sees the funny side of things. He doesn't say a lot, but everybody likes him on account of how he laughs. And when he talks he says something, he's like me only different. He likes to just listen when Pee-wee and I have a mortal comeback. He's good friends with everybody, that fellow is. And since that crazy hike he's a first-class scout and he has four merit badges. He's got pompy hair, all standing up. Me, I'm grinning all the time, I should worry.

Pee-wee said, "We're here, so we're going to eat."

"We're where?" I said. "What do you call *here*? Do you call that an argument? Did we come to the toll-gate? The great seal of the Silver Foxes can't be opened till we get to the toll-gate. That's a solomon pledge. A scout's honor——"

"*You mean Silver lunatics!*" Pee-wee screamed. "You open those lunches because it's only a teckinality, because anyway we got to the place, we had a destination when we started——"

"If we had it when we started, then what was the use of coming after it?" I said. "How can you have a destination till you get to it? You're wrong the first time as I usually am. Rules are rules. The Silver Fox rule says that not even pills shall be eaten by pilgrims till they get to the toll-gate, that's international law. We'd like to eat now, but we can't. Honor before appetite, that's our motto. The only thing for us to do is to rest a little while and tell some more riddles to keep our minds off eats——"

"Yes, riddles about ham sandwiches, *geeeee whiz!*" the kid grouched.

I said, "As I was saying when I was interrupted by ham sandwiches, the only thing for us to do is to take a rest and tell riddles so we won't think about lunch. Then after that we'll find out where the toll-gate has gone and we'll hike after it, wherever it is. When we get to it we'll eat. *Honor before appetite.*"

"Righto," Warde said.

I said, "How about you, Dink?"

He just kept laughing and said, "I'm a Silver Fox all right."

I said, "You mean you're going to be—maybe. You've got to carve your initials in the old toll-gate first."

"I thought *nuttier than nut-cake* was your motto," the kid said.

"It used to be," I told him, "but I changed it. Honor before all things."

"You make me sick," the kid said, very disgusted.

"Some people don't care anything about honor," I said.

"Yes, and some people don't care anything about lunch," he shot back.

Oh, boy, I just wish you could have seen Dinkey, the way he was laughing.

"Are we going to eat?" the kid said, kind of final like—very severe.

Warde and Dinkey couldn't speak, they were laughing so hard. I said, "Positively, absolutely, and most cordially and sincerely and respectfully we are not; not till we reach the toll-gate."

"Suppose they sent it to Europe," Pee-wee said.

"We have to keep our vow and hike to Europe," I told him. "The great seal of the Silver Foxes——"

"You make me tired with your great seal and your honor and all that," the kid said.

I said, "Here comes a man in a Ford. We'll have another citizens' jury."

"There's a girl with him," Warde said.

"All right," I told them, "the jury will decide it. I'll tell them about our solomon pledge and how the toll-gate isn't here, and what they say goes. *Honor before appetite.* Do you all agree?"

"Sure," Warde and Dinkey said, all the while laughing.

"You—make—me—tired!" Pee-wee said.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### VERDICT FOR THE COMPLAINER

That was a nineteen eighteen Ford, or an eighteen nineteen Ford, I don't know which. It had a man and a girl in it and some squeaks. They were coming along on their way into Dumboro.

I shouted, "Hey, mister, will you please be a jury?"

The man stopped the car and stared at us. I guess we looked funny sitting there in a row. The girl stared at us too. She wasn't so old, she was about fifteen.

I said, "Hey, mister, we started to hike to the old toll-gate that always used to be here and we made a solemn pledge on the honor of boy scouts not to eat lunch till we got to it. Now it isn't here, and we're having an argument if we got a right to eat lunch or not. Will you please decide it for us, because you'll be fair on account of you're not getting any of the lunch anyway?"

Pee-wee started shouting, "If you start to a place and get to it and it's there, but the thing that's supposed to be in that place isn't there, does it make any difference, because can you move a place, and anyway if you get to your destination—anyway didn't we keep our pledge? Hey, mister, am I right? If you get to your destination—shut up everybody—if you—if a thing gets moved that's the place where you're going to eat, can't you eat just the same, I leave it to you?"

I said, "Hey, mister, he's talking on three cylinders. If a boy scout makes a solomon resolution that he won't eat till he gets to a toll-gate——"

"You have to decide in the affirmative, because I'm right!" Pee-wee shouted at him.

Warde said, "You're bribing the jury. You'll be fined one sandwich for that."

Dinkey just sat there laughing and laughing. The man was kind of laughing too.

The girl said to me, "You're just a silly."

"You be the civilized jury," Pee-wee shouted at her, "because girls have got some sense."

I said, "For trying to bribe the jury that will cost you one bottle of olives and two molasses cakes. Hey, girl," I said to her, "does a scout have to keep his honor or keep his appetite, which? Am I right?"

The man was laughing, and the girl said, "You're all just a lot of *sillies*, but if you want me to decide, that little boy is right."

"I'm not standing up straight," Pee-wee shouted.

"He has to stoop so as to throw his voice out," I told her. "Do you mean to tell me you've got no use for solemn vows?"

She said, "Silly! But anyway you're wrong and I guess you don't go to school."

I said, "You guessed right, it's vacation. That shows how much you know. You didn't even know school is closed so how can you be a jury?"

"Smarty," she said, "the toll-gate isn't moved away."

I said, "Well, I don't see it in back of the seat; maybe it's just out to lunch."

She said, "You're such a smarty, that was just the house the toll-gate keeper lived in. It wasn't the toll-gate. The *gate* has been broken down for years and years and years and years and years. So there!"

"How many?" I asked her.

She said, "Years and years."

I said, "First it was five years, now it's only two."

She just said, "*Silly!* All the time while you were talking about the *toll-gate* you just meant the house that was connected with it. If you went miles and miles and miles and miles and miles you wouldn't find the *gate*—so, smarty! And you never saw the *gate* either, because it was gone before you were born. So you might as well eat your lunch. If you want to know where the little octagon-shaped house that used to be here is, why it's been moved. But you'll never find it in this world."

"That's a dandy argument!" Pee-wee shouted.

"Could you tell us what world it's in?" I asked her.

She said, "It was moved only the other day to Three Forks, but that's way, way down a country road. Three Forks is at the end of Snake Road where the State road crosses. And a man there is going to use the house for a frankfurter stand."

"He'll have three forks to lift the frankfurters with," Warde said. "He's got a lot of initials belonging to us, that man."

"Well, anyway, thank goodness we can eat," I said.

"You're just too silly," the girl said.

I said, "Kind girl, you decided a very hard question and maybe saved us from starving alive. Now we can eat in peace. I've got some dandy olives and molasses cakes in our little hero's brief-case. Will you have some eats?"

She said, "No, thank you, I had my lunch ages ago."

I said, "It must be getting quite late. It was the twentieth century when we left Bridgeboro." She said, "I'm *really amazed* to see that you actually know you're living in the twentieth century. Oh, you're so smart!"

"The pleasure is mine and many of them," I told her.

Gee, you can have lots of fun with girls.

## CHAPTER XIX THE SCOUT-ELECT

That's one thing I like about girls because one of them saved us from starving to death. Because you'll see how it was. Three Forks was a good long way off. Believe me, you're not there yet. But, anyway, you can see us eat.

We all sat in a row on that old bench and had our lunch. It's no thanks to me, that's what Pee-wee said. He had a pie in that brief-case of his. It just fitted in nice.

"I'm going to divide it into four and give each one of us a piece," he said.

I said, "Do you know how to cut a pie in four pieces? Place your finger on the edge and move it around till you come to the end, then cut across through the middle and the difference between the circumference divided into four equal parts is the answer."

Pee-wee said, "You're crazy. There isn't any end to a pie."

"Oh, boy," I shouted, "that's good news!"

So then we were all eating, *yum, yum*. The way we do we always eat dessert first. That's best because then you don't keep thinking about it while you're eating sandwiches and things like that. Anyway, the Silver Foxes have a rule always to begin at the other end no matter which it is.

I bet you think we're crazy all sitting in a row on a bench that had a house moved away from the back of it and eating and kidding Pee-wee. When we laughed we could lean way, way, way back, because the toll-gate (excuse me, the toll-gate house) was way off in Three Forks being a frankfurter stand. That day we had cream cheese sandwiches and bananas, peachy big ones, and Pee-wee's pie.

We took our time eating and I said, "Maybe you think all our troubles are over just because we ate."

"That wasn't any trouble to me," Warde said.

Oh, boy, those eats tasted good after our long hike. I said, "Pee-wee's lunch was very good, what there was of it."

"You mean there was plenty of it such as it was," Warde said.

I said, "I mean there was plenty of it what little there was." Then I said to Dinkey, jiminy *boy*, but he was laughing, I said, "I'll tell you how it is with Pee-wee's lunches. The cook up at his house is a dumb-bell and she thinks a hike means a lot of scouts; she's a Russian Swede and she thinks *hike* is English for patrol. That's what Pee-wee told her. Once he told her there were eight scouts in a hike. So whenever he asks her to give him lunch for a hike

she makes it for eight fellows. She's so dumb that even a dumbwaiter is smart alongside her. That's why we always take Pee-wee on hikes with us on account of their being plenty of eats. Most always he has apple dumplings. Got any more cheese crackers, kid?" I asked him.

Warde said, "How do they get an apple inside of a dumpling anyway?"

I said, "That's nothing. How do they get an egg inside of the shell? They turn the shell inside out and put the egg in, then turn the shell outside in again. It's the same with an apple dumpling." I said, "Give me that apple dumpling, kid, till I show them."

He said, "I will like fun. It's the only one I've got."

All of a sudden he didn't even have that—gone, but not forgotten.

After we ate lunch we felt so good that we decided to track the old toll-gate to where it was at Three Forks.

I said to them, "The Silver Fox rule still holds good. Before Dinkey can get to be a member he has to carve his initials on that old shack no matter where it is. Maybe we could eat on account of that girl being right about what she said, but still he has to cut his initials where the others are before he can be a Silver-plated Fox. We can't put him up for a member of the whole troop till he does that."

Warde said, "As long as I ate I feel like hiking. I know the way. You follow Snake Road to the highway and then you're there. It's about three or four miles. You can get a jitney from Three Forks to Bridgeboro. A one-way hike that's twice as long as we meant it to be is the same as a two-way hike that's half one way and half the other."

"That sounds like Pee-wee," I told him. "A hike that's two-thirds the circumference of what it ought to be is the same as one that's four times the dimensions of a circular triangle that's longer on one side than it isn't."

Dinkey said, "Will you two fellows have some sense and let me ask a question? Will you please tell me about merit badges?"

"I'll tell you all about them," Pee-wee piped up.

"If I'm going to be a scout I want to know something about merit badges," Dinkey said to us.

I said, "Your patrol leader is the right one to ask. Don't pay any attention to the head Chipmunk. He thinks you get the plumbing badge by eating the most plums. He thinks the taxidermy badge is for driving a taxi. I'll leave it to Warde."

Dinkey said, kind of laughing, "If I could get you fellows to be serious I'd like to ask a question and get a straight answer."

"You'll get a lunatic of an answer, that's what you'll get," the kid piped up. "Even they admit they're crazy."

I said, "Ask the question and I'll give you a serial answer. I won the civics



badge for being civil. Don't pay any attention to the Animal Cracker Patrol."

"Well," Dinkey said, "I'd like to get the tracker's badge."

I said, "You can never do that."

"Why not, I'd like to know?" he asked me.

"Because there isn't any," I told him. "No sooner said than stung. You might get the trailer's badge, though, except for one thing."

"What's that?" he asked me.

"There isn't any," I said.

## CHAPTER XX ON THE TRAIL

Then I said, "Go ahead, Dink, I'll answer you, honest, I will. I'll tell you how it is, there isn't any badge just for tracking and besides you can't get a merit badge till you're a first-class scout. But there's a troop award we have. It's a silver compass that our scoutmaster gives to any fellow that tracks an animal or another fellow for two miles. You don't have to be a first-class scout to win that either. You can be a delicate foot or anything."

"He means tenderfoot," Pee-wee said.

"So now you know," I told him. "Why, what's the big idea?"

Dinkey said, "Oh, nothing, only, gee, I want to do something, some kind of a stunt. I kind of like tracking. I think maybe I'd be good at it. If I'm going to be a scout at all I want to be a regular one."

I said, "Some day soon when we're not hiking one of us will go and hide in Palmer's woods and you can try to track us; that's most always the way we do. Just now we're tracking an old toll-gate house or whatever you call it."

So then as soon as we were good and rested we started off to Three Forks. Before we got up Pee-wee wrote down all the things that had happened so far in his little troop record book that he always carries with him. He has a fountain pen. It's a self-spiller.

Pretty soon we got into Snake Road. That road goes away down and around through the country and it comes out at Three Forks just where the highway goes through. Not many people go on that road. It's a kind of a back way. I'll tell you how it is. You can go from Bridgeboro to Three Forks on the jitney; you go on the highway and you don't go through Dumboro. But the way we were hiking from Dumboro to Three Forks that day we took a kind of a short-cut through Snake Road. It's all dandy in there, woods and everything. It's a peach of a road for hiking. We could see where there were deep ruts in the road, good and wide, where a big truck had gone. I guess that was the truck they carried the little octagon shape house on. I bet it looked funny going through there.

Pee-wee said, "One thing, I'm good and thirsty; ham sandwiches make you thirsty. I'd like to have a nice big ice cream soda or a glass of lemonade. That's the first thing I'm going to get," he said. "As soon as we get to the old toll-gate house I'm going to get a big lemonade. If that man sells frankfurters, I guess he sells drinks too, hey?"

Warde said, "It's funny, I never trailed a house before."

“Wouldn’t this do for a tracking stunt?” Dinkey wanted to know.

I said, “I’d laugh if the blamed old house doubled on its tracks. Baffled again, hey? We’ll track it yet, ha, ha!”

Dinkey wanted to know how many sides an octagon house has.

I said, “It has eight sides.”

He said, “Well, then, where’s the front of it?”

“That’s easy,” I told him; “you do it by long division. First you find the back. Then you count four flat sides from that. That’s the front. One side is the same as another only different.”

“That little house will make a dandy refreshment stand,” the kid said. “I bet the fellow that bought it got it cheap. It’s a landmark.”

“Not the way it’s traveling around lately,” I said. “I guess the reason he didn’t leave it near Dumboro is because there isn’t much traffic there. A lot of cars go through Three Forks on the highway. I bet that fellow will make a lot of money there, whoever he is.”

Pee-wee said, “Are you still going to have the rule?”

“Absolutely and magnanimously,” I told him; “it’s going to be stricter than ever. After this a Silver Fox candied date has to hike to Three Forks; he can go either way he wants to, or both ways at once, I don’t care. After he carves his initials there he has to buy hot dogs for all the members of the patrol that went with him. The man that keeps the place has to give me a soda for bringing him the business. That’s the new rule.”

“That’s like it is in the Silver Foxes,” Pee-wee said. “Roy Blakeley always makes all the rules—he’s—gee whiz, he’s a regular automat.”

“Thinking of eats again,” I said. “You mean autocrat. That’s one that’s boss of an automobile. If he bosses a trolley car he’s a trolleycrat, I’ll leave it to Warde.”

“Yes, and if he bosses a lunatic asylum he’s a lunacrat,” Pee-wee said.

“I’m wrong and you’re right as I usually am,” I told him.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SLEEP ON

That's the way we do when we hike, especially when Pee-wee's along. We just kind of wander along. We should worry about being in a hurry. And we keep jollyng each other. Maybe you wouldn't like to be in my patrol, but we have a lot of fun. Anyway, you couldn't get in because we have eight scouts now, only if Will Dawson goes to preparatory school then maybe you'd have a chance to get in.

So if you want to you can write and tell me if you're good and crazy and be sure to say if you like to hike. Only we don't go straight along like lots of scouts do. We kind of push and shove each other all over the road and that's why it takes so long. A lot we care.

Anyhow if you do want to join you can answer the questions in this application form, because that's the first thing you have to do. I made them up with Dorry Benton sitting on his cellar board.

1. Are you twelve years old and if so why?
2. What is your income per Saturday and is it net or nit?
3. Do you believe in the principles of the Silver Fox patrol or do you like school principals not so good?
4. Name three kinds of trees, not counting shoe-trees and hat-trees.
5. What kind of tracks have you discovered in the country, not counting railroad tracks?
6. When Saturday comes in vacation, is it two holidays or one?
7. Do you have to get home to supper Saturdays?
8. Do you sleep under a crazy quilt and have you got any sense not counting ten cents you have to put into the patrol positively sure?
9. Do you have to go to the store after school?
10. Are you fond of the water? State whether a drink of water or what kind. Or do you like soda better?

Maybe I'll have a lot more questions, too, but, anyway, when you hear all this crazy stuff maybe you won't want to be a Silver Fox at all.

Pretty soon the road got better and there were more houses and I knew we were coming to Three Forks. There was a sign nailed on a tree and it said:

EAT AT  
HI FRY'S OCTAGON LUNCH  
ONE MILE.

Warde said he guessed that was it all right. Pee-wee said, "I could eat a hot dog, but especially I could drink a big lemonade. I'm so thirsty I was never so

thirsty before.”

All of a sudden the road changed to concrete so we couldn't see any more of those deep ruts and then it split into two roads and we didn't know which one went to Three Forks. It was a nice lovely road, that Snake Road, as long as it lasted, I'll say that.

“Now what are we going to do?” Pee-wee wanted to know. “Gee whiz, that fellow ought to have put his sign on one of these roads or the other. Instead of that he puts it before they branch off. And I know one thing, I'm getting good and tired walking and walking and walking. And I'm thirsty too. Which road are we going to go on?”

I said, “That's easy. We're going to go on one or the other. We'll decide by saying eenie, meenie, minee, mo:

“Eenie, meenie, minee, mo,  
Along which road should we now go?

“Which is right we do not know,  
Eenie, meenie, minee, mo.”

“We take the left one,” I said.

So then we started along the left road and pretty soon we came to a sign that said:

ICE COLD DRINKS  
AT  
HI FRY'S OCTAGON LUNCH.

I said, “You see, I was right like I always am; this is the road.”

Then pretty soon we came to another sign that had an arrow pointing and it said, TO DEADHAM VILLAGE.

I said, “This shows I'm wrong just like I said we were; we should have taken the other road. Let's cut across through the woods to the other road; follow your leader.”

“I'll follow nothing!” Pee-wee shouted. “You don't know which road to take and you don't care, you're so crazy with all your nonsensical nonsense. Do you think I'm going to follow you around all night? Geeee whiz, it's three o'clock now.”

I said, “Let's be serious then; let's all take both roads. Then we'll be sure to get there. Safety first.”

Dinkey said he was having a fine time getting to be a Silver Fox.

“Chasing all over New Jersey,” the kid said, good and disgusted.

All of a sudden Dinkey said, “Look away up this road. Do you see something? Do you see a horse and buggy up there, standing still alongside the

road?”

I said, “A scout is observant. You’re a fine scout only you’re not one yet.”

Pee-wee said, “Let’s keep going till we get to it and ask the driver if this is the road to Three Forks.”

Warde said, “Suppose there isn’t any driver there?”

“We’ll ask him anyway,” I said. “That’s a very good suggestion of Pee-wee’s. If the driver isn’t there we’ll ask the horse. Come ahead.”

So we kept on that road and pretty soon, *good, night*, before we got to the place where the buggy was standing the head Chipmunk discovered another clew. He started poking around the edge of the road with his foot.

“I bet he’s found Three Forks,” I said. “I knew it was along here somewhere.”

The kid said, “Now, I know! This is the right road we’re on. Do you see where the wheels of the truck went off the concrete? Do you see that wheel track alongside the road? This is the way they carted the old toll-gate, along here, because I can see wheel marks on account of being observant. That shows how you got to keep your eyes open.” I guess he was saying that for Dinkey’s benefit.

We all knew about Pee-wee’s clews, he’s all the time finding them. So when we came to the place where the buggy was, Warde said, “If there’s a person anywhere around here that belongs to that buggy we’ll ask him if this is the road to Three Forks so as to make sure.”

“We don’t have to,” Pee-wee said; “didn’t I prove it positively sure? Come on, hurry up, so we can get something to drink. I could drink as much as the Atlantic Ocean, I’m so thirsty.”

In about a minute we were passing where the buggy was; it was a little bit off the road in a kind of a little, shady place. The horse was just standing there. I guess he was asleep and he didn’t know it. He was tied to a tree. There was an awful funny-looking man in the buggy and he was sound asleep too. He was way down in the seat just as if he had slid down and his hat was way down over his face. I guess he was having a good nap on account of the heat.

Warde said, “A white horse, that means bad luck.”

“Go over and ask the man if this is the way to Three Forks,” I said to the kid.

“Do you think I’d wake him up?” Pee-wee said. “Didn’t I find out that this is the way?”

I said, “You and your old wagon ruts and your clews! You found a piece of cloth with some printing on it, but you didn’t find little Which is Which or Who’s What or Whenny Ware or whatever his name is. I’m not looking for wagon tracks, I’m looking for a big ice cream soda. Go on over and ask the man, politely removing your hat and speaking in a tone of respect, if this is the

way to Three Forks.”

“I will *not*,” Pee-wee said, “and you won’t either. Do you think scouts are supposed to go and wake grown people up that are having naps just to ask them questions that they know the answers to already? *Geeeee whiz!* When I tell you *for sure* this is the road to Three Forks! And you needn’t say you’re going to start a citizens’ jury either, because I’m good and thirsty and I’m going straight to Three Forks and I know the way and I’m going to have a couple of lemonades, maybe three!” And he started off along the road.

“That settles it,” I said, “follow your leader.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### STUNG AGAIN

“Follow Pee-wee,” I said. And we all went marching after him, one after another. He wouldn’t stop for any more nonsense, that kid. It was awful funny the way he went stalking along and wouldn’t notice us. He looked as if he wasn’t going to bother with us any more at all.

“Bridgeboro exhibitionary forces entering Three Forks,” I said.

All the while Pee-wee didn’t turn around at all, just kept marching straight ahead, very dignified, with us after him. He looked awful funny. One of his stockings was falling down.

I said, “In a few minutes we’ll bunk right into Three Forks; follow your leader wherever he goes. When Pee-wee started pulling his stocking up we all made out to do the same thing ourselves. Gee, I have to admit we’re crazy.”

While we were marching along like that, very fast and solemn like, Warde said, “Let’s tell some riddles. Why is Pee-wee’s stocking like a dumbwaiter? Because it has its ups and downs.”

I said, “What kind of a dog is fond of aviation? An airedale. What kind of a dog is red in color and that boy scouts like? A hot dog. Here’s one for Pee-wee on account of him being a scout. If you’re in Africa, in the jungle, and you meet a tiger, if you want to keep safe which side of him should you stay on?”

“Which?” Pee-wee asked me.

“The outside,” I told him; “no sooner said than sprung. Why is a snapping turtle so swell? Because he’s very snappy. I can tell riddles and go scout pace at the same time.”

All the while Pee-wee kept hiking good and fast and not paying any attention to us; he was in a hurry to get a lemonade. I guess we were beneath his notice. We just kept marching in a line. “Follow your leader,” I said. I guess we felt silly on account of being so good and tired.

Pretty soon, *good night*, we went up over a little kind of a hill and there was the highway crossing the road right in front of us about maybe a hundred yards away. The road we were on bunched right into it. Right there where our road went into the highway was the old toll-gate house. Oh, boy, but it looked good to see it! We all started to shout, even Pee-wee. It looked just the same as ever even in that new place except there was a sign up on top of it that said:

HI FRY’S OCTAGON LUNCH

And besides that there was a bench built all the way around it for people to



sit on and eat. It made a dandy refreshment place, that old toll-gate house. The door was on the side where the highway was. There were eight windows in that old shack, one on each side. There were new shelves in every one and there were bottles and all kinds of eats on those shelves. We looked through the windows and saw that it was all fixed up fine inside, with a new soda fountain and everything.

I said, "Well, here we are. We tracked it to its secluded lair."

"And it's locked up tight," Pee-wee said.

I said, "Let's sit down and talk about lemonade."

Warde said, "There's nothing like a good, tall, ice cold lemonade when you're good and thirsty."

We were all sitting on the bench that went round the house; we were good and tired. A man that belonged in a real estate office across the road came over and started to talk to us. He was laughing on account of our crazy talk.

I said, "Hey, mister, we trailed this wild and woolly octagon house all the way from near Dumboro to its savage lair. It used to be our shrine to make pilgrimages to and now it's changed into a refreshment place and can you please tell us when it will be open because we hiked all the way from Bridgeboro. We took a long cut around, and we're good and thirsty."

"We're even thirstier than that," Pee-wee said.

The man said it was too bad because there wasn't any other place around there where we could get sodas. He said Three Forks wasn't so much of a place only lots of autos went past. Gee, you couldn't blame them. He said the only thing you could buy around there was real estate and he guessed that wasn't much good when you're thirsty.

"We want real sodas, not real estate," Pee-wee said.

The man was nice. He was laughing at us and he said, "Well, Hi Fry's a pretty nice sort of chap and he's got a good stand here 'specially Saturdays and Sundays. Only trouble with him is he's so gol blamed slow. He lives way over near Dumboro on Snake Road and I'll be jiggered if he didn't stop at one of those farmhouses along there the other day and he got to playing dominoes and forgot to come here at all. That's him all over."

"Does he come in a wagon?" I asked the man.

"Oh, yes, he'll be along pretty quick now, I reckon. You'll see him coming along in an old buggy with a white horse."

"What shade of white?" I asked him. "A kind of a whitish white?"

"Like enough he stopped to take a nap along the road," the man said.

"Excuse me while I drop off the seat in a dead faint," I said. "The fixer has fixed it. That's the man Pee-wee didn't wake up because he's such a considerate little scout."

I just kind of collapsed and fell off the seat, and Warde went sprawling

down after me, and Dinkey sat where he was, laughing and laughing and laughing—he almost fell off the seat laughing.

“How did *I* know he was the man that runs that place?” Pee-wee shouted. “*Gee whiz*, do you think I’m a mind-reader?”

The real estate man just stood there laughing at us.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE RECORD AT THE SHRINE

I said, "That was the best lemonade I ever didn't drink."

Warde said to Dinkey, "You see how it is, a scout is kind and considerate, he doesn't wake people up, he would rather go thirsty."

"You make me sick!" Pee-wee yelled.

The real estate man said, "Oh, I guess Hi would have been glad if you had waked him up."

I said, "You can bet *I* would have been glad; jiminy crinkums, but I'm thirsty. Hey, mister, you don't know what it is to be foiled by a Chipmunk. We trusted him and now look!"

The man kept laughing, and he said if we were so thirsty as all that we could go over to his real estate office and have a drink of water. He said, "Maybe it isn't so cold."

"If it's good and wet that's all we care about," I told him.

As soon as we got back from having a drink of water, Warde was showing Dinkey where all our initials were carved. All of a sudden he started shouting, "*Well—what—do—you—know—about—this?* Who do you think has been here? Slick Warner! Look, see? If he isn't some lonely hike fan! He reminds himself of Daniel Boone, coming here all alone. He was here within the last two or three days too, because look, those initials were only lately carved." I looked and, gee, sure enough, there were Slick Warner's initials carved underneath the others. Of course he had carved them there before, so they were there twice. This is the way my patrol's initials are cut on that old toll-gate house.

R. B.  
W. M.  
D. B.  
H. M.  
W. D.  
T. W.  
R. W.  
W. H.  
S. W.

Those first initials stand for Roy Blakeley. Thank you for your kind applause. If you want to see what I look like look on the cover of this book.

I'm all the time grinning. Can you blame me with that bunch and especially Pee-wee running after us? Then comes Westy Martin and Dorry Benton and Huntley Manners. His middle initial is B so we call him Bad Manners, because he would take the last piece of cake only there isn't any last piece by the time it gets to him. Then comes W. D. That means Will Dawson. He came from Grand Rapids, that's why he's such a grand scout. Then T. W. means Tom Warner, that's Slick's brother. He can bend his middle finger way back. We had a show with him in it. Next is R. W. and that means Ralph Warner, only after he got into my patrol we started calling him Slick and his mother didn't like it. But anyway, he was so good at stunts we started calling him Slick. So now he comes by that name when you call him. The next one is Warde Hollister. I guess you know him.

Now after those initials were two more letters just lately carved, S. W. We knew they were Slick Warner's because nobody uses Ralph any more for him except his mother and his aunt and people like that.

"What do you know about that?" Warde said. "When do you suppose he was here?"

"What do you mean by *here*?" I asked him. "This blamed old house was here and there. Maybe he hiked to it before it moved and maybe after. It's the same thing only different. There isn't any such place as here. It's the same as how high is up? We don't know whether he hiked here or there. All we know is he hiked to this old shack. That's absolutely positive, all by his lonesome. If that isn't like Slick Warner I'd like to know what is, hey, Warde?"

"He's slick all right when it comes to taking a hike all by himself," Warde said.

Dinkey said, "Maybe this is my chance, hey? If I could only trail him back? Do you suppose he went straight back from here, or back through Dumboro? When do you suppose he was here?"

I had to laugh, Dinkey was so excited.

Pee-wee was excited too. "Now you see the kind of a fellow I found for you! Now you see!" he kept shouting. "Gee whiz, I don't blame Slick Warner how he always likes to go off hiking by himself to get away from his crazy patrol. He's the best one of the lot because he has some sense anyway, I'll say that. *Geeeee whiz*, when he starts out to a place he goes there instead of fooling along."

I said, "He ought to go with you, then he'd get all the lemonade he wants."

"Does he go off alone a lot?" Dinkey wanted to know.

I said, "He usually only takes one fellow with him and that's himself. The reason he sneaks away on hikes like that is so as Pee-wee won't find out he's going. He'd always go with us except for the head Chipmunk."

"Don't you believe them," Pee-wee shouted. "Even our scoutmaster says

Slick Warner is the best scout in the Silver Foxes and that isn't saying much, but anyway lots of times he goes off by himself, because he's tired of their crazy nonsense and he's got more merit badges than any scout in that patrol \_\_\_\_\_”

“Sure, he thought you'd get the archery badge by building an arch, that's what Pee-wee told him,” I said.

“Don't you believe it, don't you believe it!” Pee-wee yelled. “You go ahead and track him, Dinkey; you be a real scout and not a lunatic.”

Dinkey looked at me kind of as if he was asking me a question. He said, “How about it? Can you be serious for once and tell me? Suppose I managed to trail him?”

“Some stunt,” I said.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### TRACKS

I said, "I'll tell you honest how it is, Dinkey. Slick Warner was at this old toll-gate house all right; you can see his initials for yourself. But how can we tell whether he was here or at the other place near Dumboro. Maybe he started back from here or maybe he started back from there. How do we know?"

"We might ask the real estate man if he saw any fellow around here," Warde said.

"Jingo, I'd rather not do that," Dinkey said. "I'd rather find out for myself."

"All right then," I told him. "The only way you can do it is by footprints and those are pretty hard to find unless they're new. If you find any and can trail him back to Bridgeboro, or just for two miles, you get the compass. Go ahead and try if you want to; I'll say you've got some job. Anyway, we're not supposed to help you."

We all sat in a row on that seat that had been built around the house. Dinkey was looking all around as if he was trying to make up his mind what to do. Warde told him the best thing was just to wait till we were in the woods some Saturday and then let one of us go and hide.

"Sure, all cut and dried like a game," Dinkey said. "I'd rather trail that fellow Warner just because it's not all fixed up for me to do it; it's real stuff."

"That shows you're going to be a dandy scout," Pee-wee shouted.

I just laughed and I said, "All right, go ahead, we're not stopping you."

Dinkey kept looking all around and we just sat there watching him. All of a sudden he looked at the initials, then he kind of felt of them with one finger and squinted his eyes and got very close and looked and looked.

I said, "It's a beautiful evening this afternoon if it doesn't rain before this morning."

"Sherlock Home Sweet Holmes," Warde said; he was sort of making fun of Dinkey.

I said, "You won't find any footprints on the side of the house, Dink. Scouts don't walk up walls. The only one I ever knew that goes up in the air is Sir Harris."

All the while Dinkey kept squinting his eyes at the initials, gee, that fellow was lost to the world.

I started singing:

“Oh, Dinkey Dink  
He thinked a think.”

All of a sudden, *good night*, that fellow was down on the ground crawling around feeling of the dirt and squinting good and hard at it.

“He isn’t through  
He’s got a clew,”

I kept singing.

“Will you shut up!” Pee-wee shouted.

I was just laughing, so was Warde, because we knew Dinkey could never find any footprints in that hard earth. Maybe he might win that silver compass some day, but he’d have to do like when Westy Martin won it; one of us would go through brush and soft earth where anybody could see footprints and where the bushes were broken and all that.

“Honest, Dinkey,” I said, “take your time and wait till next Saturday and I’ll go through a jungle in Ashley’s woods. Or you can wait till we get up to Temple Camp. If you do a tracking stunt up there you get a scout jack-knife, too; the kind we all use.”

All of a sudden Dinkey stood up and he was rubbing the dirt off his hands. “Is that so,” he said very wise sort of. “Well, there’s one scout that hasn’t got any scout jack-knife, if anybody should ask you, and that’s Slick Warner. Anyway, he cut his initials with a nail and before that the nail was sticking in the sole of his shoe. And he left one nail in the sole of his shoe too, and I’m blamed glad he did. I can see where he went away from here. I can’t see where he came here. Anyway, I should worry about that. Scout jack-knives that you all carry! Jingo, you fellows make me laugh. Come ahead, you can follow me if you want to.”

“I discovered him, I discovered Dinkey!” Pee-wee started shouting.

I just looked at Warde and he looked at me. “Some scout we’ve got, hey?” I said.

## CHAPTER XXV

### DINKEY HITS THE TRAIL

I said, "Dinkey, you're a wonder, but just the same Slick Warner *has* got a scout knife, because I was with him when he bought it; it was the same time I got my belt-ax."

"Well, he cut his initials with a nail just the same," Dinkey said.

I said, "Maybe he did, I'm not saying."

"Yes, and look here on the ground," Dinkey said. "You're a scout—do you call that a footprint? Why, sure it is. And do you see that long cut? That's where a nail was sticking sideways in his shoe. And do you see this other line, very faint, you can hardly see it? That's where another nail was and I guess he pulled it out."

"Good night," Warde said.

"He's right, he's right!" Pee-wee started yelling.

Dinkey said, "You see it, all right? And there's another—and—wait a minute—there's another, not so plain. He started away from here all right. And he headed into the woods. Jingoos, if that nail didn't fall out of his shoe—oh, boy, I hope it didn't."

I just stood there gaping. I'll tell you just what Dinkey had found. All around that little octagon-shaped house was hard dirt. It stood in a kind of opening alongside the road. In back of it, away from the road, was woods. And there was a path. I guess it was a short cut to some place. Anyway the dirt was worn nice and hard.

Jiminies, I'm a scout; don't you care what Pee-wee tells you, and lots of times when he's not around I'm good and sober, too, only not so much. I've got a very serious nature only I don't use it so much. When I was sitting on that seat and Dinkey was pointing on the ground all I could see was a kind of a cut in the earth. How should I know it was in the middle of a footprint? Because I couldn't see any footprint.

That was where Dinkey did a stunt because when he saw that cut he got down on the ground and then he saw it was in the middle of a footprint. And just like I told you, he said that thin line near it was where another nail had been taken out. After we saw that, we could see other cuts all the way into the woods. Sometimes we couldn't see the light mark near by. Most always we could see the shape of the shoe print if we looked hard. But anyway it was the long cuts that we could see plain. I guess you have to admit that Dinkey Waters was going to be some scout and you'll see for yourself if you go



around much with me.

I said, “All right, Dink——” That’s when I started calling him Dink, while we were at the old toll-gate house that day. I said, “Only listen before we start out. How do you think he did?”

Pee-wee shouted, “He’s smarter than all the rest of you put together. He knows all about deductions——”

I said, “Will you please keep still? Next to the Mississippi River you have the biggest mouth I ever saw. Just when I’m starting to get serious too. Footprints speak louder than words.”

Dinkey was smiling. He was kind of bashful because we were all so strong for him. He said, “Well, the way it looks to me, he hiked here. Maybe all the time he knew the place had been moved, maybe he didn’t go to Dumboro at all. I guess he had been stepping where there were nails anyway, and one of his shoes picked up a couple of them. Maybe I’m a fool, but I thought he might have pulled one of those nails out and cut his initials with it. Maybe he just happened to think to do that while he was sitting here. Two things I’m sure of, you can bet. He didn’t cut his initials with a knife. And he started away from here with one nail in his shoe and went into the woods. And there’s one more thing I’m sure of and that is that I’m going to try to track him.” Then all of a sudden he called out to the real estate man who was standing over in front of his office.

“Don’t ask him if a fellow was here,” I said. “Do it all yourself.”

“Sure, real estate men don’t know anything about tracking,” Pee-wee said.

Dinkey called out, “Hey, mister, do you know where this path through the woods goes to?”

“It’s a short cut to Bridgeboro,” the man said.

“That’s all I want to know,” Dinkey said. I could see he was good and happy.

I said, “All right, Dink, I hope you have better luck than we had tracking lemonade. You’re going to make a scout all right, I’ll say that. Only listen, just a minute. There aren’t any footprints *coming to this place*. The only prints are the ones *going away from it*. How about that?”

“All I know is he started away from here to Bridgeboro and I’m going to track him. It’s a short cut home anyway. Come ahead.”

“I’ll show you how to wear the compass when you get it,” Pee-wee said.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### BAFFLED

That's the way it was. All of a sudden Dinkey was the leader. When we started out that day he kept still all the time and was just laughing the way we were fooling and all. He was silent like Pee-wee, excuse me, my error. I mean if you made a noise being quiet he'd be as loud as Pee-wee if Pee-wee—I should worry what I mean.

Dinkey followed along that path through the woods, and we stayed behind him. Sometimes he got sort of not so sure, then he'd find one of those marks again.

I said, "Hey, Dink, when do you think Slick Warner was there?"

He said, "How do I know? It might have been yesterday, or three or four days ago, I don't know."

"I bet this path gets us home quick too, I bet it does," Pee-wee said.

"I can't track him right to his house," Dinkey said. "I don't see how I can track him after we get to sidewalks."

"You should worry about when we get to Bridgeboro," I told him. "Two miles is all you have to do and there's more than two miles of this path because I think I know where we are now. I bet I'm right. This path comes out on North Bridgeboro Road just where old man Berry's farm is. Jiminies, but we took a long way around to Three Forks."

"If old man Berry would let us cross his land we'd come right out on Main Street," Warde said.

"Sure, right near Bennett's," Pee-wee piped up. "The pleasure will be ours," I told him. "It seems like about ten years since we had a citizens' jury in front of Bennett's this morning. We'll remind ourselves of Lewis and Clark arriving at the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company or wherever they went to—the specific ocean."

Dinkey didn't pay any attention to us, he just kept on going ahead and hunting for those cuts in the earth. "How can you tell when it's two miles?" he wanted to know.

"We just take one mile and double it," I said. "Scouts know how to do those things."

"Will you have some sense!" Pee-wee hollered.

"He's passing around sense," Warde said.

I said, "Thank you, I don't care for any. I never take it between meals."

"Can't you answer him a civil question?" Pee-wee wanted to know.

“He didn’t tell me it was a civil question,” I said.

Dinkey said, “I hope I won’t come out onto a sidewalk before two miles is up. With the kind of luck we’ve been having to-day anything might happen.”

“Maybe they moved Bridgeboro away altogether,” I said.

“I hope they took the school with it,” said Warde.

I said, “Go ahead, Dink, and don’t worry. You did a big stunt and you’re in luck. This path goes through the woods for about three miles. If you follow those marks till we come to the edge of the woods you win the compass. Even if you follow them for half an hour more, you win it. You can’t lose it now. Jiminy crinkums, you’ll be getting an award before you’re really in the troop. And I tell you what let’s do, let’s go straight to Warners’ house and tell Slick how he got tinfoiled by the Silver Fox sleuth that followed his trail. And we’ll laugh ha, ha merrily, how he couldn’t go from Three Forks to Bridgeboro without being tracked by a new member.”

All of a sudden Dinkey stopped short and looked all around and he looked kind of sober.

Warde asked him what was the matter.

I said, “I guess maybe this is where Bridgeboro used to be this morning. Now what are we going to do? We can’t even have a citizens’ jury.”

“Will you shut up!” Pee-wee shouted.

“There aren’t any more tracks,” Dinkey said.

“Well, what of it?” I asked him. “Maybe he walked off the trail for a little way. Go ahead and the marks will start again.”

“I haven’t seen any for about ten minutes,” Dinkey said. “He must have left the path and gone another way. I can’t track him now. And I haven’t tracked him two miles yet either. I just lose, that’s all.”

We all just stood there. We didn’t know what to do. As long as that path through the woods went to Bridgeboro why should Slick Warner leave it? Jiminies, any scout knows that a path is always the best way to go, unless you can save a whole lot of distance, and I knew that path went pretty straight.

I said, “Maybe the nail fell out of his shoe; you just keep in the path.”

“Yes, but keeping in the path isn’t tracking him,” Dinkey said. “There aren’t any more prints so I lose, that’s all. There’s no use telling me I’ve followed them for two miles, because I know I haven’t.”

I said, “Well, you’re pretty strict about it.”

“That’s all right,” he said. “I started out to follow tracks, just as if they were an animal’s; I’m not going to get a prize by following a *path*.”

I said, “Dink, listen; I’m your patrol leader——”

You see that line after *leader*? That means I was going to say something more only I didn’t. And none of us spoke a word, not even Pee-wee. Because all of a sudden away off in the woods I heard a sound; it was kind of like some

one moaning. It was good and spooky.

I said, “Sh, listen—there it goes again. Is it some kind of an animal?”

We all just stood there listening.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### SOUNDS AND SIGNS

Dinkey didn't say anything, he just stood there listening. He seemed different from the rest of us because he didn't have any hat on and his hair was all kind of blowing loose and his hands were black, and so were his knees, on account of all the time kneeling down and feeling of the dirt. I guess that was what made him look especially disappointed, because he had been so excited on account of following those tracks. Honest, I felt good and sorry for him.

I just pulled his cap out of his pocket and I slapped it on his head. I said, "Come on home, don't you care, Dink. You were the one that saw that first mark in the ground and you followed those marks for as much as pretty nearly two miles anyway. Come on, let's not stand gaping here; that's only a tree-toad you hear. Listen, Dink, I'm going to tell Mr. Ellsworth about what you did and I bet he says all right for you to have the compass."

Dinkey just stood there listening and staring at us; he looked awful funny, sort of as if he didn't see us at all.

I said, "Come on, it's time we were getting home; come ahead, Dink. You're a scout all right; just let any one try to tell me you're not."

He kind of gave his head a shake because his hair was all falling down over his eyes and he stared straight at Pee-wee. The kid just looked at him, not knowing what to make of it. All of a sudden Dinkey picked up a little stone never even looking at it.

I said, "Come on, Dink, it's all right. If I want you in my patrol and we all say how you——"

But he didn't listen to me. "Here, take this stone and scratch your initials on that rock there," he said to Pee-wee.

"What's the idea?" I said.

"Just scratch your initials on that rock," he said to Pee-wee.

The kid took the stone and scratched his initials, W. H.

Dinkey started to laugh; it was a funny kind of a laugh. He was nervous, but he was glad too. "Just what I thought," he said. "A fellow never uses his own nickname; other fellows use it, but *he* doesn't. One of your patrol, you all call him Bad Manners. But just the same he didn't cut B. M. on that house; he cut H. M. And the first time Slick Warner cut his initials there, he cut R. W. Maybe he's Slick Warner to you, but not to himself. Did you *ever hear Pee-wee call himself Pee-wee?*"

"No, I didn't," I said.

“No,” Dinkey shot back at me, “and the fellow that cut S. W. there in these last few days wasn’t Slick Warner either. Slick Warner has a knife, you said so yourself. I lost the trail and I don’t even know whose trail it was.”

“Listen, keep still a second and listen,” Warde said. “That isn’t a tree-toad you hear. Listen! That’s no tree-toad.”

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### DINKEY

I said, "Dink, maybe you lost the marks, but you're *some scout*."

"He's a Silver Fox," Warde said.

Because right away I knew he was right. You take all the scouts in our troop. I never hear Doc Carson call himself Doc. Take even Billy Jansen in the Chipmunks. I saw him cut his initials W. J. up at Temple Camp. And you can bet Dink was right about Pee-wee, and that's the most famous nickname in the world or any other world, I don't care how many universes there are.

I said, "You're right, Dink."

"Well, if I'm going to be a Silver Fox I'm not starting anything that I can't finish," he said. "You fellows go on home to supper if you want to. I don't give a hang whether I have a mark in the ground to follow or a sound or what. Come ahead if you want to follow me."

It seemed awful funny how the fellow who had just been keeping so quiet all day and laughing at all our fooling was running through the woods now with the rest of us after him. He left the path and started running over where we had heard the sound.

"He's crazy. It's a tree-toad or something," I said.

Warde said, "That's the kind of crazy people I like to get for members."

"Didn't I get him for you?" Pee-wee shouted, all the while running along all out of breath. "Now you see what he's going to do."

Pretty soon we all knew we were wrong. Because that sound was the sound of somebody crying. Dinkey was way ahead of us running through the woods. In a few minutes we saw him get to a kind of a big mound and then he stooped down and we couldn't see him.

All I can tell you is what I saw next. First, just like I said, we saw Dinkey running way ahead of us; he was wild sort of. He didn't have his cap on. Warde picked it up and stuffed it in his pocket. Only once more we heard that sound, but we knew it was a voice. Dinkey stopped just a second and listened, then started off again. He seemed as if he thought he was all alone in the woods. Then, like I said, he got to that big mound.

And when we came to where he was I saw it was a kind of a funny end to all our fooling on that crazy hike. I felt sorry how I had been telling Dinkey how he'd have to do this and that to be a scout. Even I felt silly being patrol leader. There was a cave in under that big mound. There was a big stone slab that was lying down all broken and it had letters cut in it, but I couldn't read

them. Once upon a time that was the door of the cave, that's the way it looked to me.

There was a little fellow lying down just inside of the cave and Dinkey was leaning down over him. That was when I liked Dinkey Waters most. Ever since then I always liked him, you can bet, but that was when I was most glad that he was in my patrol. I could hear him say, "Don't be scared, you're all right, Skippy. Do you see those three fellows coming? Those fellows are scouts and they're going to take you back home."

I could see the poor little codger's head turn and look toward us and kind of smile just a little. I guess he knew we were scouts on account of our khaki uniforms. Dinkey Waters didn't have any scout uniform. I guess that was why he kept staring at us.

"Don't you worry, those fellows are scouts," Dinkey said to him.



## CHAPTER XXIX

S. W.

“That’s the time we found you,” Dinkey said to the kid. “Come in, come in wherever you are! It’s like hide and go seek, hey, Skippy. You thought I didn’t know your name, didn’t you? Skippy Ware and you live in Dumboro and we’re going to take you home, so don’t be scared. And you cut your initials with a nail, didn’t you, you little rascal?”

I just stood there, I couldn’t speak; we just stood there looking at Dinkey where he was leaning down over that poor little kid and trying to make him not so scared. Then when we came nearer Dinkey got up as if it was none of his business. He said, “You see this fellow, Skippy? He’s a patrol leader, he is—in the scouts.”

I could hardly speak, but I said to him, I said, “How do *you* know what I am? Maybe I resign being patrol leader and *you’ll* be the one—how do *you* know? Maybe—maybe—now the Silver Foxes will choose you. It shows how much you know about real scouting if you think a khaki suit——”

Honest, that’s all I could say, I just looked at the kid and I looked at Dinkey and I just went close and put my hand on his arm.

The poor little kid, he was all pale and his face was dirty and he seemed weak and sick sort of. He said to me—he said it about Dinkey—he said, “Is he in your patrol?”

I said, “No, Skippy, we’re in his patrol. It’s the same thing only different. And we’re going to do what he tells us to do. Don’t you worry, you’ll get home all right.”

“Did I discover Dinkey?” Pee-wee shouted. “Did I bring him to you? Even you’re not too crazy to admit I invented him to be a scout. So now! And anyway pretty soon maybe Ben Maxwell in my patrol his grandfather that lives out West is going to die maybe because lots of times he almost did and then maybe Ben will go out to stay all summer with his grandmother and they’ve got a dandy big apple orchard and maybe he’ll go and stay there and then I’ll decide to have Dinkey in my patrol. I guess I will after all if Ben Maxwell’s grandfather dies soon enough so anyway now I know I didn’t make up my mind yet so maybe I guess he’ll be a Chipmunk.”

Jiminy crinkums, at that poor little Skippy Ware sat up and stared. I guess he was starving and everything, but just the same he sat up and stared at Pee-wee. I guess that was the only thing that would make him sit up.

He said, “What’s him? Is he one of those too?”

“Sure,” I said, “he’s three or four. He’s the one that invented the Boy Scouts of America.”

“You mean he invented America,” Warde said. I guess the poor little kid didn’t know what to make of us. Gee, you couldn’t blame him. He just stared. He said, “You can’t take things back after you give them.”

“Sure you can’t,” I said. “If you invent a fellow to be a discovery of an apple orchard how can you be a member of his grandmother’s patrol—I’ll leave it to Warde. Skippy is right, you can’t take back. Dinkey Waters a Chipmunk! Excuse me while I have a fit. Try to get him! If Ben Maxwell wants to go out and stay with his grandmother’s apple orchard what care we, merrily, merrily?”

I guess the poor, little, lost kid thought we were crazy.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SKIPPY'S ADVENTURE

When little Skippy Ware told us how it all was I had to laugh, honest I had to laugh at Pee-wee. I had to laugh at that big fat man with a badge in Dumboro too, how Pee-wee sent him off after some gypsies. And then off we went and found Skippy Ware somewhere else. Pee-wee gave the man a clew and all the thanks he got was a good push that knocked him down. And away went the constable with his bloodhounds in the wrong direction. And then we found Skippy Ware. Honest I had to laugh.

“That shows how that old piece of cloth was a dandy clew,” Pee-wee started shouting. “It was a decoy kind of accidentally because it started them after gypsies. We should worry, hey? Because anyway when that man knocked me down he knocked me in the right direction and it serves him right. That shows how smart you can be making mistakes sometimes, because if it wasn't a clew it was a decoy and that's better. And Dinkey gets five hundred dollars and he has to buy me a soda. Gee whiz, that's only fair.”

“Absolutely, positively,” I told him, “you're erroneously correct. The proof of the pudding is in eating four helpings. Deny it if you dare. Are we going to stand here and talk or are we going to take Skippy Ware home?”

“Was I talking?” Pee-wee yelled.

“I thought I heard you whisper,” I said. “Maybe I was mistaken. Probably it was just a slight earthquake.”

“Didn't I get you five hundred dollars?” he shouted at me.

Now I'll tell you how it was about little Skippy Ware. Anyway he had sense enough to get out of Dumboro. He and the old toll-gate kind of fixed it up to go away together. This is what we got out of him while we were taking him to Bridgeboro.

He was so weak and tired we made a kind of a stretcher out of two sticks and two jackets and carried him in it. He said the men were getting the toll-gate house ready to move it and he was standing around watching them. He was inside of it when they put it on the truck and he thought he'd take a ride in it. When they set it down in Three Forks he was afraid on account of what he had done so he got into a locker that was in it and hid there till the men with the truck went away. There was a tin box full of jelly crackers in the house and he filled his pockets with those. It was good he did.

When he went outside there wasn't anybody around and he sat down on the doorstep because the seat hadn't been built around the house then. That was

when he found two nails in one of his shoes. They got stuck there while he was watching the men nailing up the windows of the old house before they moved it from Dumboro. He pulled one of the nails out with his fingers, but he couldn't get the other one out.

That was when he thought he'd be smart and scratch his initials under the initials of my patrol. After that he started into the woods. He should worry, he thought he could get home that way. He got lost and he was in the woods three days. The place where we found him was an old vault where they used to put dead people a long time ago when there were a few houses around there in the woods. I'm going to tell you some more about that place, just you wait. It's a dandy place. I don't mean it's a dandy place, but something happened about it.

Anyway little Skippy Ware was lost for three days and it was good he stumbled into that place the last day, and he stayed there he was so tired and weak. All he had to eat was just those jelly crackers. I guess he must have had a lot of them. Pee-wee says you can carry about fifty in your pockets. Gee williger, he ought to know.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### RETURNED WITH THANKS

So next we got back to Bridgeboro and I bet you'll say that was some hike. We didn't get back till after supper. We went every which way in a north southerly direction, and we used a lot of miles that we didn't need, but as long as you've got them you might as well use them. We should worry as long as it was vacation and we didn't have any home work. Since that day we've been to Three Forks lots of times and that fellow Hi Fry has dandy frankfurters and everything. He says we can always have that old octagon-shaped thing for a shrine. No wonder, because we always buy eats when we go there, the pleasure is his.

Anyway now I'm telling you about getting home that first time. When we came out of the woods near Berry's farm I knew just where we were; all we had to do was to cross that farm to get into River Road and that would take us straight down into Bridgeboro. But we were good and tired from carrying that kid most of the way, and he was good and weak too, I guess, on account of not having any eats, so we stopped at Berry's farm.

Mrs. Berry said we couldn't go to Bridgeboro till we had something to eat. She said we would have to stay and eat some supper as a favor to her. I said, "Believe me, scouts are always supposed to do favors."

Oh, boy, I wish you could have seen the way that poor kid ate. After that Mr. Berry drove us down into Bridgeboro in his Ford and we told him to take us to Mr. Ellsworth's house (he's our scoutmaster), he's got a dandy airedale, because, jiminy crinkums, we didn't want to let the Dumboro police know; they might take all the credit away from us. Safety first, that's what I said. Going down in the flivver, Mr. Berry said we should get our names in the newspapers and everything so people all over the country would know about Dinkey's stunt. He said our fame should go all over the country.

"Not if we have to follow it," I said. "Believe me, we followed our initials all over New Jersey to-day and we're good and tired. Let our fame go wherever it wants to go, we're going home."

"We all had enough of traveling, didn't we, Skippy?" Warde asked him.

I said, "I tell you a good idea, an octagon hike. I just thought of it; it just fits a patrol. First we go to the old octagon toll-gate and each scout stands against one side of it and when I say *go* each one starts out straight away from the place like spokes of a wheel and we keep getting more separated all the time and each one keeps on going straight in a bee-line till he gets to a village.

Then he gets home the best way he can. It's a good kind of a hike because it's just made to order for a full patrol and that lets Pee-wee out, the boy observed with gladness in his heart."

"Even still you're crazy," Pee-wee said. "Honest, Mr. Berry, they're all crazy in that patrol except this new fellow and he even laughs at them himself. They're such a lot of lunatics."

"He talks on the bias," I told Mr. Berry.

Mr. Berry said, well, he guessed we all had a good time anyway and he expected to see our names in the newspaper. I told him he guessed right and we have our hikes especially made for us because regular hikes don't fit us, we don't care. As long as we get home for supper, that's what my mother says. I told her we would if you'd only have supper late enough, don't blame us. Anyway, Mr. Berry left us in front of Mr. Ellsworth's house.

Oh, boy, wasn't Mr. Ellsworth surprised! Because only just then he had been reading in the Bridgeboro paper about Skippy Ware disappearing from Dumboro. He made Warde and Dinkey and Pee-wee and me call up our houses and say where we were and Pee-wee told his mother not to worry because he was absolutely, positively alive. After that Mr. Ellsworth called up Mr. Ware in Dumboro and told him about our finding Skippy. I guess Mr. Ware was asking him about it because I heard Mr. Ellsworth say over the 'phone, "Yes, it was done without blows or bloodhounds. The little fellow is here waiting for you."

"That's dandy and sarcastic," Pee-wee said.

Mr. Ellsworth said, "Well, we might as well have all the glory that's coming to us. Might as well have a little prestige, hey, Dinkey Waters?"

"I'll have some too," Pee-wee shouted. I guess he thought it was something to eat, hey?

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE REWARD

That's only the end of the hike, that's not the end of the story. In about a half an hour along came an auto with Skippy Ware's mother and father in it. And that big fat constable or whatever he was, was in it too. I was glad. The cop that stands at the crossing in Dumboro came too.

Oh, boy, but didn't Skippy go running to his mother! I guess he had enough of wild rides on toll-gates. She just kept hugging him. All the while that big man with a badge was saying, very important, that we should have taken Skippy right straight to his office instead of making them all come over to Bridgeboro.

Mr. Ellsworth said (gee, he's awful nice and quiet like), he said, "You see, Mr. Officer, that when you roared at this little scout of ours and as much as knocked him down and then went off with the supposed clew that you took from him, you really were taking something that didn't belong to you. After hearing about that I thought it was better not to trust you. A scout may be knocked down, but he's never out. And when he gets up he always goes in the right direction. These boys beat you, they beat you at your own game. And it is for Mr. Ware to say who gets the five hundred dollars reward. Scouts don't ask for payment, but we can always use money in our good cause. Mr. Ware will suit himself.

"Mr. Officer of Dumboro, when you knocked Scout Harris down you knocked a home run—for the Silver Fox patrol of Bridgeboro. By the way, did you find the gypsies that Scout Harris sent you after? Ah, Mr. Officer, Scout Harris is a master strategist; he sent you on a wild goose chase. Then he and his comrades——"

"I did a lot of dandy strategies before that, too," Pee-wee began shouting. "I didn't rescue him by a mistake, but just the same Dinkey Waters did on account of that mistake so, anyway we win. Anyway, you think you're so smart with your bloodhounds, my uncle has one that's even better than those and anyway what good did they do you? Anyway my father's got more than five hundred dollars. I should worry, and we don't want it only if we get it we'll take it so as to help poor scouts go to camp."

Skippy's mother and father were laughing so hard, oh, boy, they just shook. Mr. Ellsworth was smiling too. He's awful nice and easy-going, Mr. Ellsworth is, and he's funny too.

"Even we won't go to your town for frankfurters," Pee-wee kept saying,

“because we’ll go to Three Forks and for ice cream cones too and everything. And we buy lots and lots of them. I’ll leave it to Roy if we don’t.”

So that was how it ended and that’s the moral of this story: how you better look out when you knock a boy scout down, because he always gets up again and if you take away a clew from him you should go in the opposite direction from where that clew takes you. If you go in the right direction it’s wrong. It’s all right to follow the flag, I’m not saying, but if you follow the rag you get stung. It’s all right to follow bloodhounds, but, believe me, sometimes it’s better to follow a check for five hundred dollars for our patrol. Maybe you’ll say Dinkey should have had it for himself, but a lot he cared because he said the patrol is the most important.

So that’s the way it was, we had a lot of glory, the whole patrol. And we had five hundred dollars for helping poor scouts. Pee-wee didn’t get any glory, but anyway he has more than he can use. He’s got enough to last fifty years, I guess. Hasn’t he got a whole series of stories about him? A lot I care. If scouts don’t like the crazy things I tell about they can go and stay sane, we should worry. If you come with the Silver Foxes you know what to expect. My sister says we ought to be called the Laughing Hyenas.

Anyway in the next chapter—maybe not in that one, but in the next one after it—you’ll see how scouts can be helpful all right, because you needn’t think we’re finished eating yet. Pretty soon you’re going to see Hi Fry when he’s awake and then I bet you’ll laugh.

So now you can think about us going home and going to bed and, *oh, bibbie*, didn’t I sleep that night! When I woke up in the morning I thought I had to go to school. Then all of a sudden I knew I didn’t. After breakfast was when I started writing down all about that crazy hike. It was nice sitting on the porch and knowing that I didn’t have to go to school.

Pretty soon along came Pee-wee and he said, “Do you know when the Fourth of July is?”

I said, “Sure I do, it’s the first day after the third. Ask me something easy.”



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### WE GO OFF ON THE FOURTH

Pee-wee said, "What do you say we take a hike to Three Forks on the Fourth of July because anyway we've got to scratch out Skippy Ware's initials, haven't we? And we might as well do it then because there's going to be a parade there and we can see it, hey? They're going to have the fire departments there from Dumboro and Little Valley and a lot of places; maybe Bridgeboro is going to send some fire apparatus, that's what I heard. And there are going to be some scouts in the parade and veterans and everything, and Camp Fire Girls too, that's what I heard."

"Sure, we'll go," I told him; "the same bunch as before, hey? We'll hike along that path through the woods, it's a cinch."

So that was how we fixed it. The Ravens and the Elks and the Chipmunks started up to Temple Camp before that day. My patrol wasn't going till the week after the Fourth on account of not being able to get our cabin till then, so we didn't have anything to do anyway. Pee-wee wished himself onto us, he should worry about Temple Camp. That was just like him, lucky for Temple Camp. So we went just like we did that other time and Pee-wee said we should call ourselves the big four. Pee-wee *big!* Can you beat that?

One thing, it's easier getting to Three Forks through the woods than first going to Dumboro. And it was dandy hiking through the woods that day. Way off we could hear pistols and firecrackers and things back in Bridgeboro. But a lot we cared about those things. But I'm not saying we don't like crackers; jelly crackers are better than firecrackers. We saw three squirrels and one snake; we saw a kind of a butterfly I never saw before, too; all yellow and red like.

I said, "It's lucky the Emancipation of Declaration was signed on a holiday. I suppose that was so all the different men could be there."

Pee-wee said, "You're crazy, that's what started it being a holiday."

"It's the same thing only different," I told him.

"That's why I like New Year's, it always comes on the first of the year; it comes on a holiday. But just the same there isn't going to be any New Year's this year."

"Why not?" Pee-wee shouted at me.

"Because we had one already," I told him. "Washington and Lincoln were both born on holidays. That's a funny thing. But just the same I like the Fourth of July best only I'd like it better if it came in August while we're up at camp,

hey, Dink?”

“That shows how much sense you have,” Pee-wee said, very disgusted. “Every time you start hiking in the woods you get silly. You don’t hike, you just amble every which way and talk a lot of nonsense.”

I was just moping along hitting trees with a stick. Pee-wee gets awful mad when we go that way, just talking nonsense. I kind of winked at Warde and all the time Dinkey was laughing at us. You know the way he does.

Warde said, “There’s one thing I always wondered about. When Columbus landed at San Salvador, there was no one there who could speak Italian. How did he know it was a holiday?”

“Maybe Columbus Day wasn’t a holiday there,” Dinkey said.

Warde said, “I never thought of that.”

“You can’t think if you haven’t got any brains to think with,” Pee-wee said.

“Listen to the animal cracker patrol,” I said. “Here’s a funny thing about holidays. If Lincoln had been born on Washington’s birthday, whose holiday would it be?”

“That might happen,” Warde said.

“Sure it might happen,” I told him. “The same as Christmas might come on New Year’s.”

“Which New Year’s?” Dinkey wanted to know. “The nearest one,” I said.

“Then one holiday would be in two years at the same time,” said Warde. “You couldn’t do that without using a crowbar.”

“I’d rather give up the years than the holidays,” I said. “I bet you can’t go scout pace while you’re looking cross-eyed and keep in the path.”

“Will you stop talking crazy stuff about holidays!” Pee-wee shouted. “And will you start hiking right! The first thing you know you’ll get to Three Forks too late for the parade.”

I said, “That’s the first time I ever heard you say anything against holidays. Even you wouldn’t be satisfied with Good Friday no matter how good it is. If you didn’t want to go on a slike with us why didn’t you say so?”

“You crazy dunce, what’s a slike?” he blurted out.

“A slike is a slow hike,” I told him. “The si stands for *slow*, also sideways. Sliking is going every which way. It means going fast by taking your time.”

The kid was good and sore. He said, “Are we going to the parade at Three Forks, or are we going to flop around in the woods all day?”

“Answered in the negative,” I told him. “That means we are unless we don’t. Will you please not bother me while I study the wild life?”

## CHAPTER XXXIV HAROLD SPREADER

It takes us twice as long to go any place as it takes other scouts. That's because we do it twice as good. More haste, less feed; we'd rather stop and eat whenever we want to. But, anyway, we got to Three Forks.

Oh, boy, but wasn't Three Forks all dressed up like a Christmas tree. I said, "I guess the place is going to graduate or something. Three Forks isn't so big, but, *oh, my!*" I guess maybe they had only just heard of the Declapendence of Inclara-tion there. We came out of the woods onto the highway just before the village begins and the houses had all flags and bunting and everything on them. I knew when we came to where Three Forks begins because there was a sign along the highway that said:

WELCOME TO THREE FORKS  
SPEED LAWS ENFORCED  
GO SLOW

Now I'll tell you how it is at Three Forks. I made a kind of a map, it isn't much good. But anyway you can look at it. I guess I'd get about minus for it in school; I would if Grouchy Garrison was marking the maps, that's one sure thing. He always gives you low marks.

Do you see a house way down at the end of the map? That house is along the highway. The dotted line shows how we came up out of the woods onto the highway. That welcome sign is right about there too.

There was a dandy big lawn all around that house and there were a lot of girls there; they were girl scouts and they had on khaki dresses. I guess they came from all different towns, anyway there were a lot of them.

"I bet it's a rally," Pee-wee said.

We went up and leaned against the fence and looked in. Jiminies, they were all excited; they were kind of mad, that's the way it seemed to me.

I called to one of them. I said, "Hey, girl, is this where the parade is going to pass by? We came from Bridgeboro and we want to see it."

She said, "Oh, goodness me, what a *dreadfully* long way. You don't mean to tell me you *walked!*"



“OH, GOODNESS ME! YOU DON’T MEAN TO TELL ME YOU WALKED ALL THAT WAY?”

“Sure we did,” Pee-wee said. “Scouts don’t mind how much they walk. We walked here and back last week and we’re the ones that found that kidnaped

kid.”

“What do you call yourself?” she said. “The very idea! You’re just a kid yourself.”

“It’s a wonder somebody doesn’t kidnap you,” she said to Pee-wee. By that time a lot of girls had come over to the fence and were talking to us.

I said, “You can’t kidnap a scout; you kidnap a kid, and you scoutnap a scout.”

“Smarty,” the girl said. “Well, if you want to see the parade you’ll have to go plodding through a lot of black, sticky tar. Because a big, silly, stupid dunce of a boy scout drove the tar wagon up the highway without seeing that the tar sprinkler, or whatever it is, was turned off. So that’s what this village gets for letting boy scouts do public services.”

Another girl said, “We’re all the time reading in the newspapers about the wonderful, brave things they do. *Ugh*, they’re just little *dunces*! That Harold Spreader, I just hope he gets a good spanking.”

I said, “Explain all that. There’s no such thing as a good spanking, they’re all bad.”

She said, “Is that so, Mr. Smarty from Bridgeboro! Well, if all boy scouts are as stupid as a certain one I know——”

I said, “Do you dare us to produce one just as stupid?”

Pee-wee piped up, “These fellows are even more than stupid, they’re crazy; so we win.”

“What do you win, I’d like to know?” the girl said. “I’ll tell you what one of your wonderful, helpful, resourceful, exasperating, idiotic, good turn scouts did. He’s a big boy too, I think he’s sixteen——”

“Do you mean adjectives?” I asked her.

She said, “No, I don’t mean adjectives, Mr. Crazy from Bridgeboro; I mean *years*.”

By that time all those girls had come over to the fence and they were talking to us. I guess there were about fifty of them. They told us what that scout did; jiminy crinkums, some scout I’ll say. They were good and mad at him and I don’t blame them. There was a tar sprinkler wagon standing in front of that house, that’s what they told us. It wasn’t going to be used any more. They thought it would be a dandy idea to move it up to the place where the parade was going to form; that was up the road near the bridge. There was a big field up there and the fire departments and veterans and floats and everything from all different villages were going to rally there, and then the parade was going to march over the bridge to Havenville. If you look on the map you’ll see where the bridge is and the rallying field and all, because I marked them.

Just for a joke they asked Harold Spreader to drive the tar sprinkler up to

the rallying field, and then they were going to use it in the parade all decorated with bunting and things; they were going to make it into a kind of a float. So he drove it up there the night before and I guess he must have been fooling around the back part of it. Anyway, when all the Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts came to that house on the Fourth of July morning, *good night*, the road was all covered with wet tar. It was all black and gooey away up the road as far as they could see—way up to the rallying field. The head girl, she was grown up kind of, she said, “And we were all going to march up there in a body this morning to join the parade. *Now* I’d like to know what we’re going to do! It’s just too exasperating! The road is just *covered* with tar and the woods are soaking wet. I don’t see how we’re ever going to get to the rallying field. And we’re supposed to be there at eleven o’clock and they won’t wait for us either. And it’s all on account of a stupid boy scout!”

## CHAPTER XXXV

### FOLLOW YOUR LEADER

Warde said, "Maybe some automobiles will come along and give you a ride up to that place."

About a dozen girls said the road was closed south of that spot on account of the parade.

"And anyway motorists don't like tar any better than we do," a girl said.

I asked them, "When you get to the rallying field what are you—I mean what *were* you going to go next?"

One of them said, "We were going to join the line of march and be an independent section of the parade." She said they were going to march across the bridge and along the road to Havenville and in Havenville there was a rich man named Bentley and he was going to have a big feast for the whole parade, ice cream and cake and strawberries and chicken salad and everything.

"Sure you can get there," Pee-wee piped up. "If you're scouts you're supposed to find a way. Just because this road has got tar on it, do you think that's any reason you can't get to the rallying field so as you can join the parade? Gee whiz, I'll show you how. You got to be not scared of the woods if you're real scouts, because anyway roads are no good anyway, because the woods are better. Gee whiz, you don't have to go to the rallying field by the road, do you? Do you call that being pioneers? That's the same as scouts like Daniel Boone was. Do you think he bothered about concrete roads and tar and things like that? Anyway it's better to take a long cut around to that place. You should worry because anyway that's the way scouts do. They don't get baffled, they go in the woods. I'll show you how to do. Gee whiz, there's as much as a half an hour before eleven o'clock."

I said, "Please kindly excuse our young hero, he's full of carbon and he keeps on running even after you turn his switch off. Every time he hears ice cream mentioned he goes up in the air. He's the only boy scout that can talk using two words at a time. Sometimes he uses fifteen at a time without the help of any sentences at all. He belongs to the Animal Cracker Patrol."

"What's his name?" the head scoutess asked, all the while laughing.

I said, "I'll tell you, no joking, his name is Pee-wee Harris and he's the head chip in the Chipmunk Patrol. We take him with us as a mascot because we want to do a good turn to the other Chipmunks. You mustn't mind him, he always goes off on the Fourth of July."

"You mustn't mind them because they're all crazy," Pee-wee shouted, "and

all they can do is jolly and talk nonsensical nonsense, even our scoutmaster says so. Gee whiz, if you want to get to that rallying field all you have to do is go through the woods. I'll show you. All you have to do is to cut into the woods up there in back of this house and get up where the land is higher so it won't be wet and then turn and go north and come back toward the road and come out at the rallying place. Gee whiz, that's easy."

"The woods are soaking wet," one of the girls said.

"If you stay near the road, yes," Pee-wee told them. "But do you see that ridge back there? It won't be so wet up there. You can follow that and keep going north for a little ways and then come back down toward the road again. Do you mean to tell me that you'll get circum—you know—I mean baffled just by tar? Come on, I'll show you how to do. I explored lots of woods, I did. Even I got lost once, but I didn't care."

The girls all kind of looked at each other as if they didn't know whether to do that or not.

"If you're scouts you're not supposed to be afraid of a little wet," the kid said. "That's how it is with girls, they're a-scared of things; they're a-scared of snakes and polliwogs even."

I had to laugh. Before I could say anything, Pee-wee was over the fence and going across that lawn taking big long steps and shouting, "Come ahead, I'll show you how to do."

Some of the girls started screaming no, and some of them said yes, and a lot of them were laughing and some of them said the woods were too wet and some started following Pee-wee and calling back to the others, and most all of them were giggling. But a lot Pee-wee cared, he just marched along with big long strides and a lot of girls went following after him and some of them turned around and called to the rest to go too. They looked awful funny following Pee-wee. I guess he reminded himself of the Pied Piper going hunting for pie.

Warde and Dinkey and I just stood there leaning against the fence laughing and laughing and laughing. "Follow your leader wherever he goes," I said. Jiminies, but the girls sure do run after Pee-wee.



## CHAPTER XXXVI

### DARK DESIGNS

Warde and Dinkey and I just stood there leaning against the fence and laughing and laughing. Pee-wee went hiking across the lawn, very big and bold, with all those girls after him. I guess they thought it was a lot of fun.

I saw the way he was going to do. He went across the lawn back of the house into the woods; he went away from the road over toward the west. Over that way the woods went up a hill. One sure thing, the ground wouldn't be wet up there. Then when he got up on the high land he was going to go north and come back to the road again about where the rallying field was. That would be past the place where the tar was. I knew if he did that they would be going through dry woods. Pee-wee is a good little scout all right, only he looked awful funny marching away into the woods with all those girls after him. "He's leading them to victory," that's what I said.

"Crinkums, that kid is a whole parade in himself," Dinkey was saying. "It's a wonder those girls didn't think about that themselves."

"They'll get there in time as long as the parade doesn't start till eleven," Warde said.

"Yes, and how about us?" Dinkey wanted to know. "We should have gone with them. Maybe we could have got into the parade."

"Sure, and be an independent section," Warde said.

"I'd like to have an independent section of that ice cream," I told him.

I said, "We should worry. We can get there all right and we've got scout suits on so I bet they'll let us be in the parade. We'll be an independent section of the Silver Foxes."

"Not much of a section," Warde said.

"Well, it isn't so much of a parade," I told him. "Three Forks reminds me of New York it's so different. Two forks would be enough for it, let alone three. I tell you what let's do. Let's pick our way along just off the road. Let's take our shoes and stockings off. We should worry about getting wet. Then when we get to the place where they're mobilizing or whatever you call it, we'll wait for the kid and his girl sprout army and maybe we can get into the parade. The thing in that parade that I like the best isn't in it at all and that's Mr. Bentley in Havenville who's going to serve eats. He's my favorite independent section. If we're part of the parade we'll be in on the eats. What do you say?"

"Answered by a unanimous majority," Warde said.

“If there’s a parade we might as well be in it,” Dinkey said.

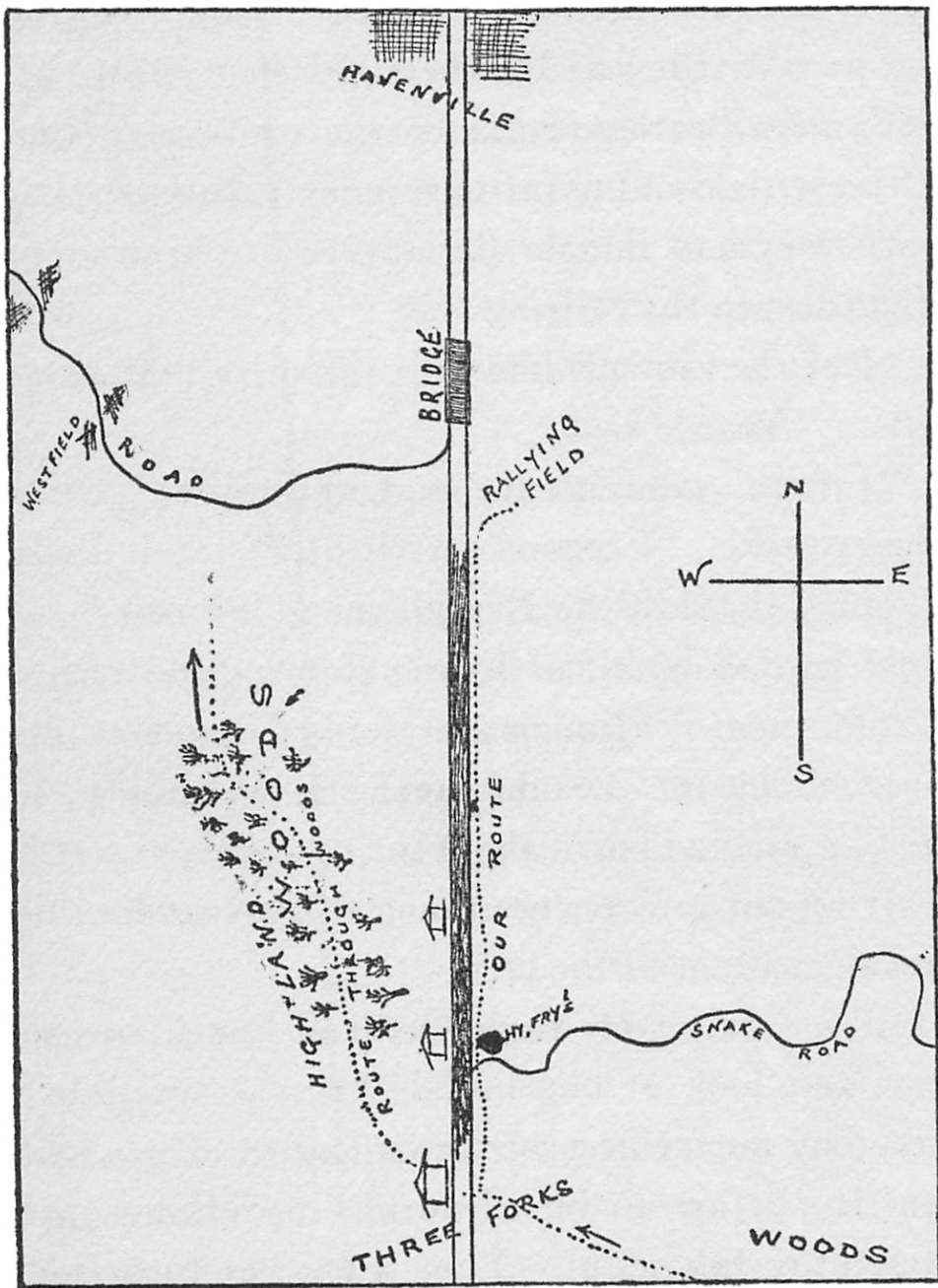
“Sure,” I told them, “and if there are eats they might as well be in us, deny it if you dare. Mr. Bentley’s the nicest man I ever didn’t know.”

“Don’t let the parade people know we’re just thinking about eats,” Warde said.

“We’ll have Pee-wee too, that makes four,” Dinkey said.

I said, “Sure, come ahead, we’ll get there before them.”

So then we took off our shoes and stockings because it was awful wet alongside the road. On the road it was all black and sticky, and off the road it was swampy unless you got way up off the road the way Pee-wee went. If you look at the map you’ll see where it says *route through woods*.



That was all high land and it was the way Pee-wee and those girl scouts went. If you look along on the east side of the road in the place where it's all tar, you'll see where it says *our route*. That's the way Warde and Dinkey and I

went. And believe me we got good and wet up to our knees too. Those girls could never have gone that way. It's good they had Buffalo Bill Harris for a scout to lead them to the rallying field.

"I bet he reminds himself of Stanley in darkest Africa," Warde said.

"Just the same it's the best way to get there," Dinkey said. "I remind myself of Ponce de Leon slopping through the Everglades of Florida."

"I remind myself of Russia starving to death," I told them. "Jiminies, it looked good at Hi Fry's, didn't it? Frankfurters and everything. I bet he's good and mad about the road being tarred. I bet lots of cars are not going to Havenville this way on account of the tar."

All we did at Hi Fry's Octagon Lunch was to stop and look at our initials because we didn't have any money because we had spent all we had the day before to buy fireworks and things for Fourth of July night. Yum, yum, but those hot dogs he was cooking smelled good! Hi Fry had a white jacket on and everything. But anyway it didn't do us any good to look at our initials. What's the use of being famous like that if you're hungry?

"We should have brought our lunch like I said," Warde said to us.

"Don't worry," I told him, "we'll get into the parade. They always like to have boy scouts."

"Yes, four boy scouts," Dinkey was laughing, "that's a fine representation."

"It's a dandy big word anyway," I told him.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### FIREWORKS

Oh, boy, but it was like a circus at the rallying place. There were a couple of autos full of old grand army veterans; one of them was Pop Allison from Bridgeboro. And there were a whole lot of overseas boys. They were good and fresh, they were kidding us. I guess they came from a lot of villages around there. There were some floats too, all fancy. One of them said HAVENVILLE ROTARIANS. There was a dandy brass band playing music while they were waiting. There were fire departments too; there was one apparatus from Bridgeboro and I saw Charlie Gerson. He gave me a ride on the hook and ladder once. There was a float about the Woman's Club too.

After we dried our legs and put our shoes and stockings on I went up to a man that had a ribbon on him and I said, "Hey, mister, we're boy scouts. Can we be in the parade?"

He said, "Bully for you, we haven't got a scout contingent, just a few floaters."

"Don't talk about floaters," I said. "We came near sinking trying to get here."

He said, "How many of you are there?"

So then I told him there were three of us, but another one was coming through the woods with a lot of girl scouts. He said the girls around that way were organized better than the boys. I told him just the same in Bridgeboro we had lots of scouts. He said there were six or seven more scouts going in the parade and he guessed they were on the bridge waiting for it to get ready to start. He said we should go on to the bridge and get together with those scouts. He said, "Don't buy any stale waffles because when we get to Havenville we're all going to have refreshments at the big Bentley place. Tell those other scout kids on the bridge not to buy waffles. Tell that waffle man with a basket to go chase himself, he's a nuisance."

I said, "Thanks, mister, and when you see a little short scout with curly hair come out of the woods with a lot of girl scouts, will you please tell him to come up the road to the bridge, because we'll be there?"

The man said kind of in a hurry, he said, "Yes, yes, sure; now you kids get together and decide on a leader. We'll be starting in fifteen minutes."

I said, "Are you sure Mr. Bentley didn't move away or something?"

He just laughed and he gave me a good push. I guess he was boss of the whole parade.

So now I'm going to tell you what happened. Warde and Dinkey and I went up the road a little ways to where the bridge was. That bridge goes over the river. There were some more things and people belonging to the parade there. There were four scouts that belonged in Westfield. They were sitting on the railing while they were waiting. They said the scouts in Havenville had gone away to camp. One of them said he belonged to a patrol named the Poor Fish, because they didn't have any money. There was a wheelbarrow there with all bunting on it and a little girl sitting in it. The man that was going to push it was sitting in it too. He was a clown. There was a hay wagon too all filled with kids dressed in white. And besides there were some fellows that weren't scouts and they were shooting off firecrackers. We saw the waffle man too; he was going around with a basket shouting, "Fresh waffles!"

All of a sudden one of those fellows threw a firecracker at me and it missed me and went into the hay wagon. Oh, boy, zip goes the fillum, in about two seconds that hay wagon looked like the camp-fire at Temple Camp. Talk about a blaze, *good night!*



IN ABOUT A MINUTE THAT HAYWAGON LOOKED LIKE THE CAMPFIRE  
IN TEMPLE CAMP.

Some excitement! We all started lifting the kids out of the hay wagon; some of them climbed out. Most of them started crying. The man that was a

clown began beating the fire with a big cloth, but it didn't do any good. Somebody went running to the field to tell the people there and by the time everybody came the whole bridge was on fire. The fellow that threw the firecracker, and the other fellows that were with him, ran away.

It was lucky there was some fire apparatus there, but just the same they didn't do much good because they couldn't pump water up out of the river. They just had to use buckets. Anyway, Warde and Dinkey and I helped, but that bridge was a goner. Oh, boy, did it make some blaze! Big pieces of wood kept falling down into the river and you could hear them sizzle in the water. Some of them kept burning while they floated away. The old hay wagon went down kerflop with a big splash. All the hay was burned up. The wagon was on fire, but the water put it out. I guess inside of fifteen minutes there wasn't any bridge, only parts of it down in the water. That shows what happens when you throw firecrackers around. Safety first, that's what some fellows think.

The head parade man said, "Well, that's some Fourth of July celebration. It's the end of the bridge and it's the end of the parade too."

"End of a perfect day," I said.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### OUR WANDERING BOY

So that was the end of the parade; it was pretty short, it ended before it started. Some of the floats and the parade people went up the side road to Westfield and those places, and some of them drove over all that tar to Three Forks. We could have gone back home with the Bridgeboro firemen only we wanted to stay around there and wait for Pee-wee.

Some of the men built a kind of a fence across the road and put up a sign that said DANGER BRIDGE DOWN. Those scouts that we met on the bridge said they would get a tent that belonged to one of them and that they'd camp there all night so as to prevent any cars from taking a header into the river. They were going to have red lanterns. While two were sleeping the other two would be watching the road; they would be on different sides of the river, and they'd swing their lanterns whenever they saw anything coming. I bet they had a lot of fun that night, those scouts. Warde said he wished it was us.

So then we went back to the rallying field and waited for Pee-wee and those girls. We waited and we waited and we waited. After a while there wasn't anybody left there but just the three of us. We were sitting on a board from the bridge; it was laid across a couple of rocks.

I said, "Do you think the people in Havenville are waiting for the parade? They'll have some wait, hey?"

"I guess they know about the bridge," Warde said.

Dinkey said, "That was some parade all right."

"What do you suppose is the matter with friend Pee-wee?" I asked them.

"Cracky, but he ought to be here by now," Warde said.

"Maybe they got lost," I said. "If he started reminding himself of the Indians like he does and finding his way by trees and squirrels' nests and moss and things, just to show off, they're likely to land at the North Pole."

"I hope he doesn't go by his compass," I said, "because it doesn't work. It needs to be wound up. You have to hit it with a rock if you want it to point to the north. And then it points to the south."

"He'll be good and mad when he finds there isn't going to be any parade," Warde said.

"So will the girls, I guess," I said. "Anyway we should worry. We had a good time so far only I'm getting good and hungry. How about you, Dinkey?"

He said, "I'm not getting that way, I've been that way for about eighty minutes and two hours. How long are we going to stay here anyway?"

Everybody's gone, even the bridge has gone."

"Some Fourth of July," I said.

So then we all got to feeling silly. You know the way we are, and we started singing

"Oh, Pee-wee's lost in the woods you bet;  
Because he didn't get here yet.

"He's good and late, he's good and late;  
And we should worry, we won't wait."

Then we started singing "Where Is Our Wandering Scout To-day"—gee whiz, but we're crazy.

After a little while Warde got kind of serious; he said he thought we ought to go hunting for them, because maybe they got lost. He said, "You know how Pee-wee is, he goes by woodlore signs. If he found a nest with an Easter egg in it, that would be a sign he was going east."

"*Good night*," I said, "if he's showing them some woods lore we might as well go home."

"It's blamed funny they don't get here anyway," Dinkey said.

"Not if he's trusting to Nature's signs," I said. "Goodness only knows where they are. They sure ought to be here by now, that's one sure thing."

Warde said, "Oh, come on, we should worry about him. I'm not going to spend the whole Fourth of July in this old field. You know Pee-wee, most likely he's giving them a demonstration of scouting, lost in the woods and all that stuff. They'll be here all right, only what's the use of us sitting around all day waiting while he finds out which is north and east from sassafras roots and cube roots and every other kinds of roots? Come ahead, let's see if we can get across the river to Havenville and then we can go home on the train."

"Yes, with whose money?" I asked him. "I've got a great deal less than one cent with me. If you multiplied what I've got in my pockets by eight million you wouldn't have enough to drop in a slot for a cent's worth of chocolate. Do you think the Dreary Railroad is going to take us for nothing?"

"Maybe Pee-wee's got some money with him," Warde said.

"That's a fine joke," I said. "Do you know any more like that?"

"My father knows a man in Havenville," Dinkey said, "if we can only get there. He's a nice man, and I can find where he lives; he's got a big house."

We all jumped up all of a sudden and started down the steep bank to the river. I said, "I hope next Fourth of July comes in the middle of the night because then I'll be asleep and I won't be hungry. Gee williger, I'm sorry the thirteen colonies got mad at England now. That's what started all this trouble."

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE PROMISED LAND

Anyway I wasn't going to hike back to Bridgeboro, not if I could help it. I said, "We should worry about the kid; when he gets to the rallying field he'll get there, that's all. Let them worry about how they get back to Three Forks. When he finds out there isn't going to be any march to Havenville, I bet he'll be good and mad."

We floated across the river on that old hay wagon—*some ride*. We used an old board and sort of paddled it. Then we had a walk of about maybe three-quarters of a mile to Havenville. But anyway there wasn't any tar. Dinkey said he'd go in a drug store and look in the 'phone book for that man's address. There wasn't any 'phone book in the drug store so we went in a bakery where there was a 'phone and then was when we wished we had some money. *Oh, boy*, that bakery smelled good.

When we found out where the man lived we went up the main street to find Crosby Street. But before we got there, *good night, magnolia!* There was a dandy great big house with lots and lots of grounds all around it and, oh, jiminyes, I guess about twenty-five or thirty tables and lots and lots and lots of chairs. There were flags up and everything. I knew right away it was the Bentley place where the parade was to end up.

Warde said, "Look away up toward the house, on the porch and all around there. Do you see what I see?"

"Girls! Girls in khaki!" Dinkey said.

"Look who's sitting on the steps with girl scouts all around him, eating something out of plates!" I said. "Please excuse me while I faint. *It's Pee-wee!*"

Honest, there he was sitting on the steps of the porch with his scout hat on the back of his head, shoveling something out of a plate into his mouth. And those girl scouts were all around on the porch and on the grass and in chairs and they were all eating away like mad.

"*Well—what—da—you—know—about—that?*" I just blurted out. "What do you suppose happened?"

"Don't ask me?" I said. "All I know is what's happening."

"It's happening all right," Dinkey said.

"Come ahead," I said to them.

We hiked up the gravel walk. Jiminyes, that lawn was fixed up for about five hundred people, I guess, and when we got to the porch we just stood there

staring. The kid's mouth was so full he couldn't talk for about a minute.

"Isn't it perfectly *wonderful!*" one of the girls piped up. "He brought us straight to Havenville and we're having a *royal* feast."

"I'll say you are," Warde said.

Another girl said, "Oh, he's just the most *delicious* little boy scout! He led us *much* farther north than he intended to and, would you believe it, we bunked right into Havenville and then we heard about the terrible fire on the bridge and how there wasn't going to be any parade. Wasn't it just too mean for anything how they couldn't march here! But Mrs. Bentley said never mind, as long as our contingent had arrived safely we might just as well sit right down and do justice to the refreshments; there are just oceans and *oceans* of things to eat and we're simply *gorging* ourselves."

"I made a dandy mistake," Pee-wee blurted out. "I came too far north because there was too much foliage on the east side of a tree. That shows you can't always trust them, but anyway we're having some dandy chicken salad and Mrs. Bentley says as long as there's no parade we can have all the ice cream we want."

"We're simply *gorging* ourselves," another girl said.

Another one said, "Isn't it just perfectly scandalous. But you see we crossed our bridge before we came to it and now we're doing justice to this perfectly gorgeous banquet. Isn't Walter just the dearest, most wonderful little scout that ever was!"

I said, "Do you call it doing justice to things to murder them? *Goooooood night!* Another dandy mistake! All that's left of the parade! Photograph taken at the finish!"

Just then Mrs. Bentley came out and she said, "I want you three poor boys to just sit down and begin murdering as fast as you can. There are refreshments here for three hundred people and I'm afraid you'll have to just help me get rid of them."

I said, "Believe me a scout is helpful."

"Sdandychicksald," Pee-wee blurted out.

I just gave him one look. "Don't try to talk," I said.

So that's the way this crazy story ends, with Pee-wee being silent. Actions speak louder than words. Anyway, there isn't any more to tell you except about our eating. I guess you think we're a lot of nuts anyway. Maybe that's why we like nut-cake, hey? Anyway, we have a lot of fun. Pretty soon after that we went away from home for the summer. The pleasure was theirs, I mean our families, we should worry. Stick to the Silver Foxes and you'll have a good laugh and some eats too, maybe.

So long, I'll see you at Temple Camp.

THE END

[The end of *Roy Blakeley's Elastic Hike* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]